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THE IMPOSTOR;

OR,

BORN WITHOUT A CONSCIENCE.

ILLUSTRATED.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL I.

LONDON:


T. C. NEWBY.

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1847.

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INCANTATION.

"If it were skipped, when 'tis skipped, then 'twere well,
It were skipped quickly."

Macbeth, illegitimate version.

"Vice I detest from the depths of my heart, and doubly
detest it,

Chiefly for causing so much prating of virtue itself,
How, you detest then virtue?—I would 'twere by all of
us practised,

And, God willing, the word never were mentioned again!"

Schiller—unpublished translation.

What's a book deprived of a preface?—certes
'Tis a headless spear, an imperfect monster,
Meteoric-stone-like it falls amongst us,
Rudely obtrusive.

INCANTATION.

Introduced by no one, a chill repugnance
Holds us back, as once, in the fabled story,
Shrunk the dandy, seeing a stranger drowning—
How could he save him ?

When a scribe expects you to read three volumes,
Prudence, ere accepting his invitation,
Hints 'twere wise enquiries to make concerning
What is for dinner ?

“ Who are you ? what is your book about, sir ?
Where's your railway, who are the chief directors ?
Who the chairman ? where are the stopping stations ?
What is the damage ? ”

Then I answer—“ friend, I'm a travelled student,
Life with care regarding in every posture,
Back and front, light side and the dark, fore-shortened
And in perspective,

Mine's a railway, bordered by fields of fancy
On the the right ; reality's rocky mountains
Leftwards thrown their shadows, illumined by the
Gas of experience.

Passions wild, enrapturing love, caballings,
Darkling crimes, delusions of mystic science,
Wondrous revelations of nature's secrets—
These are my stations.”

INTRODUCTION.

A YEAR ago, I ventured to offer to the public a political burlesque, termed 'Anti-Coningsby,' which was perhaps received with more favor than it deserved; certainly more than I myself ever anticipated. A few words in excuse of the many blunders, imperfections and even misprints of this trifle, may perhaps be excused. The notion of writing it occurred to me immediately after the appearance of 'Coningsby; or, the New Generation,' than which it is difficult to conceive a more pleasantly written and

ingenious absurdity. I was, and still am a great admirer of Mr. D'Israeli's literary talents, (Vivian Grey and Contarini Fleming are novels not likely to be easily forgotten,) but the glaring nonsense of attempting to substitute a retrograde for a forward political and religious movement, was too *comical* to be resisted. Such an utter misconception of the spirit of the times, by so clever a man, appeared so improbable, that I at once came to the conclusion that the Honorable M. P. for Shrewsbury was merely acting for the sake of effect, in fact that he had determined upon becoming *very remarkable* at all hazards, laughing perhaps in his sleeve at the innocent youths who followed and adopted his presumed opinions. For indeed Coningsby had not long 'astonished the town' before sundry young friends of my own, began to shew unmistakeable signs Young Englandism. At first I could scarcely believe that a party was really about to be established upon so ridiculous a foundation, but at length reluctantly compelled to acknowledge the fact, I seized my pen, and in less than a couple of months produced the satirical extravaganza above alluded to. It may be imagined that there was little time for correction, indeed

except in the printer's proofs, I read but a small portion of the work even a second time, and I have never had the courage to do so since, for fear of discovering fresh errors. Before the first volume was completed, I was also unfortunate enough to be attacked by nervous headaches—no very pleasant companions to an author.

Such as it was, the critics fell upon it with hungry ferocity, although few of them seemed to understand the tone of burlesque irony and wilful exaggeration pervading the whole book; and by invidiously isolated quotations, often totally misrepresented its tendency.

And why did they attack it?—not for ridiculing Young England and Mr. D'Israeli—they were all ready to join in the laugh. Not for its sarcasms upon the present Premier, or the Home Secretary of post office notoriety—they quoted the passages with unction. Not for its hints on India or indeed its political satire of any description—but for a few just though incautious strictures on a certain influential author, and the defence of one whom nobody else cared to defend. 'Yet Brutus is an honorable man; so are they all, all honorable men!'

Anti-Coningsby however heard its effect—and that was all desired by the author—a hundred echoes, unacknowledged extracts, and appropriation of ideas from its pages, bore testimony to this fact. The ‘New Generation’ was laughed down, and even their heroic leader (who continues to do great things despite his own theory as to the universal juvenility of mundane heros) sank all mention of the name, at least, in his new work ‘Sybil or the two nations,’ which, in superficial inconsistency, acknowledgedly outdoes its predecessor.

Schiller tells us in one of his exquisitely terse epigrams, (the greater part of which, with unaccountable indolence, were omitted from a recent translation of his poems.) that “When monarchs are building, the masons get work,” and this quiet contempt for criticism might accord with his system. I am however of opinion that *speaking* contempt, is much more effective. I shall therefore take the liberty of retaliating upon one or two of the most prominent culprits, with the view of rendering them more cautious for the future. Reformation being the only object of punishment consistent with the true spirit of philanthropy.

First and foremost, let me drag to light the individual who *did* the review for Fraser's Magazine, premising however that it was generally believed that Anti-Coningsby was the work of a certain authoress of rank, at present residing abroad. Upon this hint the critic spoke, and with all the chivalry and gentlemanlike delicacy peculiar to such persons, wound up some dozen pages of abuse, and ill-chosen extracts, including some invidiously misquoted Latin, by politely saying to her supposed ladyship. "Go woman and sin no more."

I need not remind the reader of the character to whom this sentence was originally applied, nor point out the vulgar and foul malignancy of the quotation under the circumstances.

And if I were to say to the anonymous reviewer "Blasphemous unmanly dog! keep your tongue from evil speaking, lying and slandering!" could any human creature blame me for the natural indignation prompting the speech? I think not.

We are so accustomed to see *posts* and *railings* in connection with one another, that the most unmitigated abuse from the morning paper of that name surprises no man, we shall therefore

inflict but one home thrust upon them in return for their savage attack, the particulars whereof we do not at the moment remember. Vide Macaulay's article on Croker's edition of Boswell's life of Johnson, page 357, collected edition. The passage may be applied morally instead of physically by the reviewer in question.

It is scarcely worth while to allude to the snarls of certain minor literary scavengers, such as "The Court Journal, &c.," but I do take the liberty of protesting against the present partial and corrupted system of criticism under which newspapers feel themselves bound to revile every political opponent, and magazines degenerate into the mere tools of their publishers. (To which rule the Spectator, Critic, and several of the weekly papers, &c., form honourable exceptions.) Finding that no reliance is to be placed in reviews, and unable to peruse one tenth of the new works, constantly pouring from the press, the public at length becomes utterly indifferent to the progress of literature. But for me, I have long since arrived at the conclusion that hostile reviews can no more crush the reputation of a book worthy to survive them, than puffing praises how-

ever dearly purchased, can give fame or extended circulation to a stupid production. I take my stand in the lists of literature, dip my pen in *Gall*, and like the knights at ancient tournaments “defy all comers,” in the words of Turtaios—

Tethnamenai gar kalon eni promachoisī pesonta
Andr’agathon, peri ē patrīdi marnamenon.

By introducing literary criticism, satire of political and social evils, and popular illustrations of interesting facts in science, I have hoped to add to the interests of a romance, in which I trust no deficiency of adventure, plot, and carefully developed character will be found. But the day has gone by for mere fashionable novels. The age is utilitarian, and even novelists (the poets of present times) must conform to the mode. Nor do I think that a change from morbidly affected refinement and exclusiveness, and weak formal sentimentalism, to more practical and impassioned incident is by any means to be regretted. One of the reviewers in abusing a love scene in my former essay blamed it for being so *desperately in earnest*. The same fault will, I am happy to say, be found in the present volumes.

With regard to the illustrations I must observe that nothing but the difficulty—nay almost the impossibility of getting a stranger to carry out one's ideas would have induced me to aid by the imperfect efforts of my amateur pencil, my verbal powers of description, whether they are an improvement or not remains for the reader to decide.

One word to *Young England* ere concluding this preface. There has of late years crept into our *belles lettres*, in addition to the *soi disant fashionable* trash above mentioned, a violent predilection for low life, slang, and vulgarism of every kind. Dickens and Ainsworth led the way, and whole hosts became their followers. Would-be-comical monstrosities *usque ad nauseam* have filled the ephemeral publications of the day. Let us *endeavour* to re-establish pure classical taste, to inculcate admiration of the beauties and sublimities rather than the meannesses, and distortions of nature, to become free, liberal, unprejudiced students of philosophy, and this not in recurring to the barbarism of our feudal ancestors, or the advocacy of despotism, and pompous affectation of religionism (Puseyism—popery, if you like it better) as the mature author of

Coningsby would insinuate but by calmly observing and studying the signs of the present times, and boldly looking forward to the future. And remember, youth of England, that these are the words of one, who really, and practically belongs to *the new generation*.



THE IMPOSTOR.

CHAPTER I.

CONTRAST.

MIDNIGHT was at hand, as in a small ill-furnished room, above a low shop, in one of the dirtiest, narrowest, and most ancient looking lanes in the oriental moiety of the English metropolis, were seated two individuals of the most opposite appearance conceivable. The one, an old man of at least three score, exhibited a set of pinched up, calf-skin coloured features,

in which dotage, stupidity, and cunning seemed to struggle for the ascendancy. His claw-like fingers were clasped upon his breast, over which a tattered dressing-gown was buttoned, the probable antiquity whereof would have baffled all the conjectures of the antiquarian curious, and irresistibly reminded one of the faded vestments worn by mummies in the crumbling catacombs of Egypt.

The other tenant of the room was a youth with a clear, pale complexion and placid features of almost feminine delicacy and beauty, shaded by long, dark brown, silk-like hair, which a Circassian Sultana might have envied. His small white hand supported a brow remarkable for intellectual development, and his dark hazel eyes flashed beneath eyebrows almost faultless in their arching symmetry. His dress consisted of a threadbare suit of coarse black cloth and the clean white collar of his shirt being

thrown back, displayed a neck and some portion of a breast, which a Sappho might have described, but a Phidias could never have imitated.

Surely it would have been difficult to discover two beings more violently contrasting in their exterior than these two men, whose mutual humanity appeared, in truth, the only link between them, the only point in which their orbits touched.

“Two and twenty years to-day, two and twenty years,” muttered the old man thoughtfully, “since we left Genoa; you were not born then—not born.”

This remark was partly addressed to the speaker himself, in soliloquizing reminiscence, partly to the young man who by the light of a solitary candle pored with great attention over an ancient folio, in fact a worm-eaten and dusty edition of the works of Lord Bacon.

“Two and twenty years!” exclaimed the youth, “how slowly time passes!”

“I fancy,” continued the old man without noticing this interruption; “I fancy I can see the old shop again—we lived on the ground floor of a palazzo—with marble flooring and such a low rent—such a low rent!”

The old man chuckled as he repeated the last words which he appeared to utter with peculiar exultation, and rubbed his hands over one another, till his knuckles cracked like an electric machine, in a manner peculiar to old misers; whilst he gently stirred the fire with the toe of his dilapidated slipper, and then gazed—almost with affright—at the minute but sudden flame elicited by this extravagant proceeding.

“Ha!” said the youth abruptly putting aside his book and turning to the fire, “would that you had never left Italy!—I should like to

have seen its mountains and its vineyards, its dark eyed girls and marble palaces !”

“ A poor country though—a very poor country !” said the old man deprecatingly.

“ Poor !” exclaimed his companion wildly ; “ yes, poor in the dross you value so dearly ; but rich in a thousand joys which gold can never purchase. An English King may envy an Italian peasant his purple sky and gentle climate !”

“ Silly boy, silly boy,” muttered the old man, fixing his weak spectacled eyes upon the scanty fire.

A long silence followed.

There was something strange and unnatural in the manner and conversation of these two beings. They seemed rather to address themselves to their own thoughts, than to one-another ; neither respect nor affection appeared to mingle in their relation, yet, in the eyes of the world, they were bound by the nearest

and dearest ties of consanguinity—those of father and son.

“ You knew Lord Byron, did you not, at Genoa ? ” said the youth, as if by a sudden and painful effort, to his companion.

“ Knew him ? ” replied the old man, “ knew him !—he came almost every day to rummage over my stock of old books and medals—ha ! ha ! he was a keen man, was his Lordship, at a bargain—a very keen man ; I was obliged, you know, to ask him twice as much as my other customers, because, you see, he always used to beat a thing down so !—to be sure, one can afford to sell cheaply what one buys for next to nothing, but then there is the risk, and—

“ Yes, I understand,” interrupted the youth with ill-concealed impatience and disgust. “ I think I have heard you say that he admired my mother’s sketches ? ”

“He did, indeed, very much, and offered very large sums for them—that is, large considering—but your mother was a foolish woman, a very foolish woman, and used to give them to him for nothing—absolutely for nothing—only think of giving them away like that, when she, or rather *I*, might have obtained such high prices for them ! But your mother was a clever woman—a very clever woman—she died, you know, on board the ship we returned by, in giving you birth—ah ! it is very late—very late ; we ought to be in bed ; good night, Alfred !”

“Good night,” rejoined the youth.

The old man turned round as he reached the door—

“Mind, Alfred,” said he timidly, “do not sit up too late reading—I know you are very studious, but you will hurt your eyes, and waste so much candle—so much candle.”

The young man took no apparent heed of this economical injunction ; his eyes were intently fixed upon one of the knobs of a dilapidated chest of drawers in the corner of the apartment.

CHAPTER II.

BLOOD.

No sooner did Alfred find himself alone, than a remarkable change took place in the expression of his features. His eyes flashed with exuberant delight as though he had triumphed over some difficult problem or lethiferous foe, his lip curled with the lofty pride of intellectual power, and he waved his arm with a strange and graceful majesty like some Chaldean sorcerer of the olden time weaving a spell to bind the spirit world.

“It cannot be,” he exclaimed with sudden energy, “that in my veins the blood of this old miser flows. Could I but trace a single point of moral or physical resemblance I might incline to credit the paternity, but not the torrid and the frigid zones can be more widely different than we in features, stature, mind, and disposition. On the other hand, everything conspires to prove the truth of my long cherished suspicions. My mother’s residence at Genoa—*his* frequent visits—the vast difference in the ages of my mother and her husband—the latter’s mean and avaricious disposition, the time of my birth, and above all, the striking resemblance I undoubtedly bear to that portrait of whose extraordinary likeness to the original my supposed father daily testifies. It must be so—an internal voice convinces me, and could I doubt the fact but for a moment, this single argument must at once destroy all scepticism.”

The speaker rose and walked across the

room. A superficial observer might have watched his course for miles and scarcely have detected the peculiarity, for it could hardly be termed a deformity with which he was afflicted. But so it was—he *limped*—one leg *was* shorter than it fellows; with all his beauty of countenance, with all his loftiness of bearing, the hero of these pages was *club-footed*.

He advanced towards a curious old circular mirror in a frame of carved oak above the fire-place, and contemplated for some time with an aspect of grave and critical scrutiny, the reflection of his fine oval countenance. Then turning to a small water-colour sketch of the author of Childe Harold, he gazed upon it intently for a few moments, after which he alternately regarded the mirror and the painting, and then threw himself with an air of triumphant conviction into the old arm chair from which he had risen.

To commonplace minds ancestral pride is of

all things the most absurd and contemptible. Even by many who entertain it, it is at best regarded as a venial weakness, but in the eyes of the enlightened student of human physiology it assumes not only a rational, but even a laudable aspect.

Well knowing that virtues, talents, feelings, and inclinations, both good and evil, are handed down from generation to generation, he draws a simple inference from the probable fact, that as his ancestors have been men accustomed to ennobling and gentle pursuits, to command rather than obey, to refined viands, and invigorating beverages, to well ventilated dwellings, pure air, and cleanly habits, in fine, to a moral and physical culture superior to that of the common herd, so that he himself must inevitably stand both spiritually and corporeally in a similar position.

Some reflections of this kind flitted rapidly through the brain of our hero, who cared little for the *bar sinister* involved by

the genealogy he had adopted, but was sufficiently agreeably occupied in drawing comparisons between his own idiosyncrasy and that of his poet sire, with whose life and writings he was, I need scarcely add, profoundly acquainted.

It has been remarked before now, some few thousand times, that people in general find little difficulty in convincing themselves of that which above all other things they are most ardently desirous of believing. Nor did the present instance prove an exception to this rule.

The miser's son, before retiring to rest, had discovered between his own mind and that of the deceased bard a similitude even more striking than their unquestionable physical resemblance.

"And am I," thought Alfred, "I the son of so exalted a father, to work out an obscure destiny in the grovelling station to which I am apparently born? Am I to waste these

stores of varied information the result of the unintermitting labour of years, these superior powers and talents, which I am conscious of possessing, these refined feelings and capacities for enjoyment which in my solitary studies I have so assiduously cultivated behind the counter of a wretched book-stall! for ever excluded from association with those whose society could alone afford me pleasure, whose minds alone are fitted to comprehend me?

“Avaunt! ye dull sectarians who see in man nothing but the victim of original sin and unrelenting destiny. I scorn your poor-spirited and debasing theories! Man is—should be—at least I for one will be the arbiter of my own fates—ay, and perhaps of those of many others!

“Knowledge is power—the sciences of nature are mine; courage is strength—I laugh at every fear—prejudice is folly—Spinoza, Descartes himself could not be more unshackled,

and let the worst happen, my hopes blasted, my schemes defeated, and myself held up to the scorn and odium of a darkened world—Another sun may shine upon my efforts—another clime receive my body Should even universal failure wait me, there yet remains the dull, well beaten track of unaspiring mediocrity—there yet remains the grave which reason teaches me to regard without a shudder. Pain is the only evil I can recognize—abhorred fiend ! let every inlet of my being be closed to thy pestiferous influence, whilst each minutest pore gapes to receive the heavenly breath of pleasure. Nymph divine ! let thy celestial essence ever gird me—me, thy eternal votary !

“ How many thousands miserably vegetate, through three-score years, to close their mean career—the brightest joys of life a seven sealed book ! Such beings *exist*—I contemplate, to *live*.

“ To live in glorious delight, and when life offers no untasted bliss, no novel object to excite my hopes, no mystic secret yet to be unravelled, when pleasures known, all pall and new ones fail, *then* I'll *despair*—*then* I'll *repent* my course—BUT NOT TILL THEN !”

CHAPTER III.

DEATH.

A FEW mornings afterwards our hero (for such in default of a better is Alfred Milford) was much surprised by the non-appearance of his *soi disant* father at the breakfast table, and having waited for some considerable time, he imagined that the old man must be ill, and accordingly having first concluded the meal, ascended to his bed room.

No answer being returned to his repeated

knocks, he opened the door and entered the apartment. Advancing to the side of the bed, he was struck by the unearthly pallor of the features, and the fixed, glassy stare of the eyes. He seized a small mirror, and held it before the old man's mouth; no symptoms of breathing were to be detected; he felt the hands; they were cold and clammy. The miser was dead.

Alfred had never seen a corpse before, and an unaccountable sensation came over him. He felt no regret at the old man's death; on the contrary, nothing could have given him greater satisfaction; but there is a something startling in the sight of a form which but the day before was instinct with life, however feeble, thought, however narrow, and motion, however decrepid, degraded to a mere clod of senseless matter, disagreeable to the sight, and revolting to the touch of its fellow men.

“One bar, however, to my success re-

moved !” quoth our hero sternly, as soon as he had completely satisfied himself of that important fact. “ Now to remove another trifling obstacle, and Death and I have done our morning’s work.”

So saying, he advanced towards an old battered escrutoire in the corner, and having unlocked it with a key which he drew from the pocket of the deceased man’s coat, he, after a short search, possessed himself of a small paper carefully folded and indorsed. This he tore open, and regarded for some time with an expression of sarcastic contempt.

“ To the society for the propagation—ha-ha ! we will remedy this folly by and bye, in the mean time we must keep up appearances ; so to begin”—he rang the bell violently, and his features assumed a solemn and lugubrious expression.

“ Mary,” said he with apparent agitation, when a slovenly servant-maid at length responded to his summons, “ I fear my father

is dead!—run to the nearest surgeon's, that, if possible, something may be done to recover him before it is too late; tell him to bring his lancet with him—quick—quick!”

The servant instantly departed and our hero seated himself at the foot of the bed, in a sad and meditative attitude.

“Now,” thought he, “I shall have to listen to the commonplace consolations and pious exclamations of our particularly scanty acquaintance; luckily we have no relations, that I know of, so that it will soon be over; ah! here comes the surgeon.”

“I will bleed him directly,” said the hard-by abiding hakim, advancing to the bed side of the deceased, “but I see that he has been dead for some hours.”

“Is there no hope?” said Alfred.

“Not the most remote,” replied the surgeon.

“It must have been very sudden,” remarked our hero.

“ Yes ; I should think it must,” rejoined the Esculapius.

“ What do you suppose was the cause of his death ?” inquired Alfred shrugging his shoulders.

“ It is impossible to conjecture,” replied the other.

“ Impossible ?”

“ Without a *post mortem*,” corrected the surgeon.

“ I have lost an excellent father,” said Alfred pressing his hand against his forehead.

“ Take a little brandy and water,” prescribed the general practitioner.

“ Who can minister to a mind diseased ?” rejoined Alfred, sorrowfully shaking his head.

“ Who, indeed !” snivelled the apothecary.

CHAPTER IV.

A PROFESSION AND A NAME.

It was the night after the funeral ; Alfred was again alone in the same old room and the same old arm-chair in which he originally presented himself to the eyes of the reader. On a table by his side were writing materials, and a variety of papers, which he examined with great attention.

“ The last will and testament,” muttered he aloud, fixing his dark, expressive eyes upon

a paper he held in his hand, “ will at any rate serve me as a schedule of the property. Let me see—two thousand seven hundred and sixty-five pounds, eleven shillings, and nine pence three farthings, in the three per cent consolidated bank annuities—it has an agreeable sound, by Mammon ! I wonder how the old fellow managed to save such a sum by selling old books and woodcuts—*cum multis aliis quæ nunc describere longum est*—with other antiquarian trash it would take a life time to enumerate.

“ To be sure we lived wretchedly enough, and after all I believe I gained more by the old books than he did. I extracted their spirit before he turned them into consols, and now my propitious stars have made me lord of both.

“ Then I perceive—there is the lease of the house—that I shall sell with all convenient expedition--and the stock of old books—they

will fetch something, I presume. Well, fortune smiles upon me at last—to go a step farther than the Sicilian, I *have* a point to rest my lever on, and I *will* move the world.

“What is the Archimedean screw to the power of ready cash! ridiculous comparison!

“The world is open before me, and I am free to choose my own position. Suppose I were to enter myself at one of the inns of court and study for the bar, spend all my money on my noviciate, and take the chance of getting meals and clients afterwards. Or shall I plunge amid the mire of commerce, and either win a plum, or die a beggar. Or rush to Oxford, take degrees and orders, then vegetate a pious orthodox and half starved curate. Or walk the hospitals, and pass the hall, then inhabit a house with a ruby lamp over the door, and display a surgery

bell, torn nightly from the land of rosy dreams, and

“ Nature’s best restorer balmy sleep,”

to aid the philoprogenitive efforts of loving wives and maidens. Or shall I strut in gaudy livery, an illpaid warrior in country quarters. Or join the mob of artists, and daub flattering portraits of old and ugly women, and the fat, unmeaning faces of their children. Or as an architect raise suburban villas ; an engineer, and plan tremendous railroads ; or go to sea and pass long months deprived of woman’s soft and gentle intercourse, to me the very breath of life ! Or take a farm and cultivate corn for pheasants. Or worse than all, buy half a hundred quills and scribble food for harsh and careless critics to snarl at in their ignorance.

“ These are the common turnpike roads of life, along whose dusty course the herd of

lawyers, merchants, parsons, doctors, soldiers and artists, sailors, builders, farmers and self-deceiving poets plod their way with slow pedestrian toil. I've more ambition ; I must drive the mail !

“ An independent nobleman ! there's music in the very sound. Lords are but Lords by the subservient world's courtesy, and I, if skilful enough to enforce that courtesy, am, I opine, as good a Lord as they. A rebel, is but an unsuccessful patriot—imposture—but imposture when unveiled, and arts like mine defy discovery. So be it then, I hereby do confer rank, title, and nobility on myself. Money I have to commence the character, and ingenuity to sustain it, by means fair or foul. A story and a name are all now wanting.

“ Let me consider—English titles are dangerous, Debrett's infernal peerage would betray me ; the title must be foreign then—a Count. Yes ; I am a Count. Of course I am ; I wish I could remember how our illus-

trious family gained the title. Ah ! I have it ; my grandfather was sent to Russia on a secret mission, and for his services to the Muscovite government, ennobled at St. Petersburg. I have heard my father tell the story as a child, but do not remember the particulars. Not being rich he lived in great retirement in London, or its neighbourhood, devoting all his time to my education.

“ This golden snuff-box (yet unbought) was a present from the generous emperor—ha, ha, ha ! a splendid tale, I’ll write it down at once, and read it ten times over to fix it on my memory, and prevent the contingency of variations. Perhaps by often telling the same story I shall myself believe the thing at last or nearly so, and that would be advisable.

“ Now, for a name—a grand, high-sounding, interesting name—a name whose very tone is aristocratic—a name—stay, if my life must be an acted lie, my name at least shall have a dash

of truth. Biron—yes, Count de Biron is my name ; and for a baptismal designation, by heavens I'll take Mesmer—glorious Mesmer ! the bold discoverer of nature's mystic secrets—and, as I've heard, my mother's distant relative. Yes, *Mesmer Count de Biron* is my name !

AURELIUS.

PHRENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

A large brain, fine nervobilious active temperament, the whole intellectual lobe largely developed, with great Ideality. The organs of the moral sentiments Benevolence, Conscientiousness and Firmness, all very large. Self-esteem and love of approbation fully developed, with considerable caution. Very moderate Acquisitiveness. Destructiveness and combativeness full. Organs of the affections fully developed.



MESMER.





CHAPTER V.

MORALITY.—PRECAUTIONS.

HAVING thus delivered himself, Biron (as we shall henceforth denominate our hero) deliberately tossed the dead miser's will into the fire, and watched its rapid consumption by the greedy flames with an expression of grim satisfaction that sat somewhat strangely upon his beautiful and almost girl-like features.

“ Oh the folly, fraud, and injustice of the human race !” exclaimed the self-made Count

in a bitterly ironical tone of pseudo virtuous indignation, “ who not only permit a privileged few to deprive them of their equal birthrights as men, and to monopolise during their lifetime the earth and the produce of its fertile soil, or what is, in fine, its simple representative, money, with all its attendant comforts and enjoyments, but actually allow them after death arbitrarily to perpetuate their illegal possessions to others, no matter whether wise or foolish, virtuous or vicious, compelling countless generations to bear the burthen of their sins and suffer inconceivable miseries, the result of their primeval rapacity. For my part I reassume my native right—the right of occupancy, as lawyers term it. I love not sordid toil, and see not why I should be doomed to labour for my daily bread, in sweat and dark anxiety, whilst others, far more worthless, revel in every delight that earth can offer !”

Certes, Mesmer de Biron was a very wicked

youth, notwithstanding his silken locks and fine dark eyes—a positively shocking character! But then it must be considered that he was almost entirely self educated, having left school at an early age, and principally gleaned his knowledge from unassisted solitary study, the indiscriminate perusal of his supposed father's strange assortment of books, and the shelves of a neighbouring circulating library. Even as a child he had been conspicuous for his deficiency in the repetition of the catechism by rote, and his contempt for all established authority.

But we have undertaken to relate his history, not as that of a perfect and unexceptionable young gentleman like the Jamiesian heroes of the times by-gone, but simply as a remarkable individual whose thoughts and adventures furnish subject matter for much curious psychological analysis.

We have no wish to extenuate his vices, but trust that the indulgent reader will not,

as is the general fashion of these times, accuse us of participating in or at any rate approving of our hero's misdeeds, because we do not stop to embellish each with supereminently moral annotations, and ultra virtuous axioms accompanied by mental turning up of the eyes, and pious exclamations of sincere horror at his proceedings.

Having destroyed the obnoxious document above mentioned, our adventurer made three weighty resolutions, which he swore, by the shades of his father, to keep sacred under all circumstances whatever.

The first was never to know or recognize any of his former associates, any acquaintances of the defunct miser, or any person or persons aware of his real name and origin, whenever or or wherever he might encounter them; and this was the less difficult from the studious and retired mode of life he had previously cultivated.

Secondly, he resolved to forget with all

convenient speed every fact relative to his cast off family and station, which might militate against the little romance of history --he had adopted.

And thirdly, he determined upon betaking himself to *la belle France* as soon as certain necessary arrangements were effected, persuaded that it would be infinitely more prudent and advantageous to make his grand *début* in his assumed character abroad than at home, and quite out of range of the atmosphere he had formerly so reluctantly inhaled. This last resolution however he soon had reason to recant, as will be seen hereafter.

The funds happening at this crisis to stand above par, he proceeded to sell out the whole of his stock immediately, and paid the money, which, with what he obtained by the sale of the other effects, amounted to about three thousand pounds, into a banker's at the West End to the account of that distinguished young nobleman—Count Mesmer di Biron.

Finally, having taken up his quarters at a quiet second-rate but respectable hotel, he ordered a couple of suits of clothes at the most fashionable and expensive tailor's in the metropolis, and in every other respect provided himself with a wardrobe appropriate to his high rank and pretensions. A splendid dressing-case from Mechi's, boots from Hubert, Parisian gloves and hat, cards and card case, and unexceptionable cane, in short, everything that according to his idea appertained to the outward mien of a gentleman of good family and moderate fortune.

Since his supposed father's decease he had permitted a dark, silken fringe of hair to usurp, by degrees, possession of his upper lip, a satin opera-tye replaced the once open collar and carelessly exposed neck; in truth, as he stood before a *psyche* in his new and well-fitting costume with his sable-trimmed great coat, his wrinkle scorning gloves, his flexile walking stick, his long dark curling hair and neat

moustache, and his slight but athletic form instinct with strength, grace, and nervous energy, he looked—aye, every inch—a nobleman! And those who had known him in his youth of poverty and seediness, must have had keen eyes to recognize, in the magnificent looking individual before us, the misanthropic melancholy student, ere-while the tenant of a petty book-stall in one of the dull dirty city's—dullest, dirtiest, and most obscure thoroughfares.

“I can imagine,” thought the aspiring Mesmer “old Mops the grocer meeting me and starting with a sort of dim remembrance or half recognition, then hastily continuing his way, laughing at himself for the absurd and utterly ridiculous supposition.

Or should he venture to believe the evidence of his memory and address me, I can picture his confusion, dismay, and apologies, on my deliberately elevating my eyebrows and calmly observing---Really, sir, you must mistake me

for somebody else, I have no recollection of our having ever met before——

You are not Mr. —— ?

I have not that honor —— I wish you, as the Americans say, ‘a pretty considerable, damned, particular good morning,’---or something to the same effect, couched perhaps in less objectionable language.

I——r——I beg your pardon, sir,---quite a mistake, I see now---different voice---altogether different---very sorry.

Then I should bow to the poor embarrassed devil with good humored condescending politeness, and walk coolly away, leaving him with open mouth and eyes, muttering a thousand curses on his own super-eminent stupidity.”

After all our hero *was* a different person, and had in fact so completely divested himself of his *ci devant* individuality, that the comedy above rehearsed in his imagination seemed in as little danger of a performance upon the

stage of reality, as, (to keep up the theatrical metaphor) the tale recorded between the boards of these no doubt highly entertaining volumes, is most assuredly but a faint commemoration of events once acted upon the boards of life, and still---*O tempora ! O mores !*—most successfully acting !

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE THEATRE

WE left Mesmer imagining improbabilities before a looking-glass. This was not, however, an occupation to afford any very lasting excitement; accordingly our adventurer seized his *chapeau*, and, it being about the ninth hour, sallied forth in search of fresh amusement.

Passing the Haymarket theatre, and the bills having an attractive look, he forthwith

entered that temple of Thespis, and was soon comfortably established in one of the stalls.

The first piece being over, he stood up in a gracefully lounging attitude, with his back to the orchestra, and surveyed the beauty in tiers around him through his new opera glass, with the easy manner and languid nonchalance of a twenty seasoned dandy.

Scarcely however had he glanced along the dress circle, when a face in one of the private boxes completely rivetted his attention.

The sight of the Gorgon's grisly and snake entangled head could not have exercised a more petrifying effect upon the savage band of Pentheus, than did that exquisitely lovely countenance upon the fascinated Biron.

He stood like a marble statue in a museum--- a pump in a square, a hat-stand in a hall--- pray, choose your simile, as sings the bard of Greece in his inimitable Juan. We don't

pretend to be economical with other people's ideas, so if you are not of opinion that comparisons are as odious as the proverb insinuateth, pray liken my hero to a tea-urn, a camphine lamp, the Duke of York's column, Her Majesty's patronage of art, science, and literature, or anything else in the world that stands still and does not move either forwards or backwards, upwards, downwards, obliquely, diagonally, in a straight line, a crooked one, or in any other conceivable direction.

In short, Mesmer stood in a "pretty considerable fix," as we are given to understand the Yankee barbarians on the other side of the ocean express themselves. His "Dolland" still raised to his eye still pointed towards the private box, in which, like a brilliant diamond brooch in (use a significant commercial idiom) a ditto of red morocco lined with velvet, was set or seated, the lustrous gem of beauty to whom our susceptible hero had, for the time being,

already, (legally speaking) sold, assigned, transferred, and made over his valuable and fire circulating heart; though I must candidly confess it my opinion as a conscientious man of law, (I once read a volume and a half of Blackstone's commentaries) that the *want of consideration* would have rendered the conveyance practically void -- at any rate in court.---Courting is quite another affair I apprehend.

He stood and gazed. The orchestra commenced their toil—he heard them not. The curtain rose—he marked it not. The pitites called upon him “to sit down,” to “remove his hat,” to “take off his head!” their words fell upon his ear unheeded.

At length an individual behind him touched his shoulder with an umbrella; he started, felt inclined to blush at his absence of mind—but did not—and sank back into his seat still gazing on the star that threw its gentle radiance

over his night, with almost passionate intensity.

Meanwhile the young lady becoming conscious of Biron's enthusiastic scrutiny, and either supposing him an acquaintance or reciprocally (perhaps magnetically) attracted by the beauty of his features, or as is most plausibly to be conjectured incited by simple curiosity, in like manner raised her opera-glass to her eye and regarded the young Count *more suo* with most persevering vigilance.

Delightful communion of soul with soul, of which the eye is as it were the window, brought by the magic medium of science, in the shape of Dolland's opera-glasses, to such charming, apparent proximity whilst the placid consciousness of the really intervening distance permits the soft enrapturing intercourse unbroken in upon by blushes, cast down eyes, and the spiteful comments of your saintly prudes and still more prudish sinners !

“Farewell angelic dream !” murmured the *soi disant* De Biron as he watched his unknown charmer receding from the box, “farewell—I fear, for ever !”

But, as she reached the door of the *loge*, to our hero’s ineffable satisfaction the beautiful sorceress turned round for an instant, her dark fur tippet exquisitely contrasting with her ivory neck and coquettishly peeping shoulders, and bent one last look upon him, then vanished like a silvery vision of the night.

Mesmer felt a sudden pang dart like a poniard through his breast ; he absolutely groaned.

Another moment, and he was outside the theatre. He would follow her home ; he would find out where she lived—he would—but just as he reached the door, two vehicles drove from it in totally opposite directions. Who was to tell him which contained his goddess ?

But she might not have left the theatre !—

fragile reed of hope ! For full a quarter of an hour he watched in vain, then muttering an exclamation of despair he entered the Café next door—and ordered—some whisky punch and a cigar.

CHAPTER VII.

EAVESDROPPING.

IF there was one redeeming point in Mesmer de Biron's character it was his enthusiastic appreciation of beauty. Yes, wondrous as it may appear, this strange being from whose heart honor, shame and remorse were for ever banished, the ruling principle of whose nature was a pride boundless as that of the fallen archangel Lucifer, the fabled monarch of the fiends, a giant selfishness almost sublime in its

complete consistency, thrilled with delight before a painting or a statue, bounded with joy on beholding a magnificent landscape—judge, then, of his sensations at the sight of one of the loveliest specimens of female beauty, a picture lighted by the fire of passion, of all the works of nature, at once the most attractively enchanting, the most undoubtedly divine!

“Matchless girl!” thought the stricken Mesmer as he abstractedly stirred his punch with his cigar.

“The London and Bubbleton railway shares will be at a premium to-morrow, I expect,” said a business-like voice in the next box.

“Good heavens! if I should never see her again,” continued the soliloquizing Biron with a feeling nearly allied to desperation.

“Then I shall sell out, of course,” replied a second voice in reply to his companion’s previous remark.

“Who can she be I wonder! I would give

a hundred guineas to know her name or residence !” thought the Count.

“ Don’t throw away your money,” said the first voice coolly ; “ patience, my dear fellow, and the shares will go up like a balloon.”

“ I feel devilishly miserable !” thought Biron ; “ waiter ! bring me another cigar ; it is no use giving way—pooh ! Mesmer Count de Biron, be a man ; consider how improbable it is that you will ever see her again—pshaw, childish nonsense !”

“ And about that house ?” said the second voice in the next box in a lower tone than its owner had hitherto used.

Our hero having roused himself from his reverie was induced, by the mysterious way in which this question, in the adjoining box, was asked, to give his attention, in some measure, to the conversation carried on behind him, glad of something to distract his thoughts from the fruitless consideration of a subject which

could but excite feelings of disappointment and vexation.

“ Well,” replied the first speaker, “ in my opinion the sooner it is done the better ; at any rate I know this, that if *I* had the money at command, to-morrow’s sun should not go down before the bargain was closed.”

“ But are you sure that he is persuaded of the weakness of his title ?”

“ Quite—positively. In fact I made him believe that in case of a law suit the chances were, if anything, rather in favour of the other party claiming.”

“ And you are *quite* certain that there is no *real* danger ?”

“ My *dear* Cashall *do* you know who I am, or—”

“ I beg your pardon—I beg your pardon ; it shall be done at once ; pray arrange it all for me without delay.”

“ And the promissory notes ?” said the other almost in a whisper.

“ Yes, yes ; they shall be given up—you shall have them the moment the deeds are signed.”

“ Ha ! ha ! a new way to pay old debts,” chuckled the other.

“ Hi ! hi !” laughed Cashall ; “ by the way, what did you say was the number of the house ?”

“ Twenty-seven, D—— Street,” said his companion slowly, and distinctly, whilst the other wrote down the address in his pocket-book.

“ It is a splendid house,” said Mr. Cashall’s obliging friend, “ and in a most desirable situation, decidedly fashionable, and likely to become still more so from the projected improvements ; the rent must be, at the least, two hundred a-year.”

“ Two hundred, eh ? said Cashall, “ not bad interest for *twelve*, is it ?

“ Between sixteen and seventeen per cent ;” replied his companion dryly.

“ Well, I am very much obliged to you, and if I ever have an oppor—”

“ Not another word, my dear sir ! you give me up those little scraps of paper of mine which, *entre nous*, are worth little or nothing, for I never intended to pay them, and you owe me nothing or next to nothing.”

This was uttered in a half jocular, half serious manner.

“ Gad ! you are a cool hand Monville,” replied Cashall ; “ but we must be going . Ah ! it is raining, very fast too, have you an umbrella ?”

“ No, I never carry one ; I do not mind the wet.”

“ You are not afraid of drowning ; reserved for a loftier destiny, eh ?” said the other laughing at this stalest of jokes.

“ Ha-ha !” laughed Monville with an almost imperceptible tinge of sarcasm in his manner, as they quitted the coffee room.

From the moment these two individuals had

risen the *suo-jure* Count had regarded them with quiet but marked attention. In the taller of the two, a stout, burly, middle aged man, in a drab great coat, with huge black whiskers and eye-brows, a large aquiline nose, and a countenance in which the animal essentially predominated, he at once recognised him who had been addressed as Cashall, and whom he rightly conjectured to be a man of commercial pursuits of some kind or other. His companion Monville, a fair, slim, good-looking man, of about eight and twenty, he was inclined to regard as a member of the legal profession, and there, too, the event did justice to his penetration.

“Waiter,” said Biron, as soon as the door closed upon the two strangers, “have you a pen or a pencil?”

“Yes, in a moment,” replied that personage, awed by our hero’s dignified and aristocratic appearance.

De Biron drew a card-case from his pocket,

scribbled a few hieroglyphics upon the back of one of the cards, paid for his punch and cigars, and returned to his hotel to dream of the bright-eyed beauty of the Hay-market.

Had his soul depended upon the event he could not have told the name of a single character represented in the comedy which he had—*not* witnessed.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TEST.

ALTHOUGH not heavily, the rain still continued to descend, and the bleak wind moaned piteously along the streets, as Mesmer quitted the Café, and without noticing the call of a solitary cabman who still lingered upon the stand before the theatre, proceeded homewards on foot with long and rapid strides.

It was one of the peculiar traits in the character of this singular man to take the

greatest pleasure in things which to most other people were sources of infinite discomfort and annoyance. Wind and rain were his especial delight, indeed, his nature seemed almost to partake of the amphibious, for he would actually often select a circuitous route in preference to the direct road, on occasions such as we are describing.

Whether this was to be referred to an innate spirit of contradiction, to his birth upon the waves, or to any other cause, physical or moral, I leave to the decision of the more profound students of human physiology.

Here let it suffice to state the simple fact that such was positively the case with our eccentric hero.

He had not walked far in his whimsical defiance of the elements, when he was startled by hearing his name --- his *real* name distinctly uttered behind him. He started, and his first impulse was to walk on without noticing the appeal, but a small hand laid gently upon his

arm, induced him to turn round and confront the speaker.

A tall, sickly looking girl, with a face of more than ordinary beauty, whose pallor was rendered almost ghastly by the light shining through a green bottle in a neighbouring chemist's window, poorly attired and dripping with wet, confronted him.

"Alfred!" said she in a voice trembling with emotion, "dear Alfred, how glad I am to see that you have become rich---for what other conclusion can I draw from your present appearance --- Ah! you do not know what I have suffered!"

"But really, you,"---Mesmer began, but the girl, without heeding his interruption, and pressing his hand to her bosom, continued with increased animation.

"You cannot conceive all the misery I have endured---I will not enter into details, they could but pain you---but oh! how glad I am that we have met to-night, for you will forgive

me, Alfred,---you *must* forgive me when I acknowledge that to-night---this fearful night! I have wandered forth, driven by want, by starvation---not my own---but my child's, *our* child's, to seek for bread---now that every other resource has failed me---in degradation and infamy!"

"My dear girl," said Mesmer calmly, unmoved in the slightest degree by the touching accents of maternal affection and devotion to himself, in which his poor victim had delivered herself, "you evidently mistake me for another, my name is Count de Biron."

"What!" exclaimed the girl, starting back, "is it possible?---Indeed I beg your pardon, sir: there is a great resemblance between your face and that of a friend I once had, excuse me, I am sorry I detained you."

"Stay," said Biron, "although I am not the person you took me for, as I have heard the tale of your misfortunes and am convinced of the truth of what you have stated—it would

have been strange if he had not been so—
“Allow me to offer you a slight assistance, which may perhaps be the means of rescuing you from an abyss, whence there is no return—good night---be honest, industrious, and virtuous, and bright days may yet be in store for you, for remember, ‘virtue is its own reward’—its only reward too, in most cases!” thought Biron, with an internal smile of derision.

“May God reward you for your kindness!” sobbed the unfortunate, awed by the impressive way in which the last words had been uttered, and grasping the gold which Biron tendered with all the nervous eagerness of destitution.

“No thanks,” said Mesmer, kindly, “it is nothing to me, I have plenty and to spare; tell me where you live, and you may perhaps hear further from me.”

The girl mentioned an obscure street in the suburbs, and would have reiterated her expressions of gratitude, but the generous stranger was already striding away.

“How very like my dear Alfred!” she

murmured. "Ah! if *he* could but see my present state!--that is, if he yet lives---for his mysterious disappearance has never been accounted for, he may have been murdered---terrible thought!--and yet better to die, to sleep in the peaceful grave, than to suffer the united pangs of poverty and remorse as I do!"

Was it imagination that suggested to the ear of the drenched victim of passion and misplaced affection, a stifled laugh of scorn from behind her? She hurried onwards to her poor abode with quickened steps and palpitating heart. Who that has never felt want, can depict the joy arising even from the prospect of a meal.

Meanwhile---strange anomaly in the nature of mankind!--the unprincipled, or rather the *wrong* principled Mesmer, felt all, and more than the usual pleasure resulting from the feeling of having relieved a suffering fellow creature. Perhaps Biron could be

generous though incapable of being just---his heart could swell with benevolence whilst contemplating the darkest deceptions, and the basest frauds ; could congratulate itself upon bestowing a few paltry pieces of gold, of which he could not possibly feel the want, upon a being who but for his selfish thirst of enjoyment might have remained pure and happy in the possession of virtue, respectability, and comfort.

Perhapseven in his breast the voice of paternal affection was not altogether silent, and he would save the child of his selfish and unreflecting passion, from the horrors of the most terrible of deaths. All this is barely possible.

CHAPTER IX.

MADNESS.

EARLY the next morning our hero was aroused by a noise overhead, suggestive of the notion that all the devils in Pandemonium had either broken loose or had a holiday given them---and devils are addicted to gymnastics, or the pantomimic philosophers at the Theatres Royal Drury Lane and Covent Garden, &c., blunder most egregiously.

Bang!---crash!---bump! the furniture in

the rooms above seemed, like the renowned Baron Munchausen's wardrobe, to have gone raving mad.

Nothing is more disagreeable than doubt, so Mesmer hastily drew on that portion of the European costume which modern refinement so delights to allude to under every variety of misnomer --- I mean his trousers, thrust his feet into his slippers and his arms into his dressing-gown which he hastily buttoned, and emerged from his chamber in order to ascertain the cause of the disturbance.

The first thing he met with on his way upstairs to the next floor, where the aforesaid diabolical gymnastics or insane upholstery galoppades were apparently going on, was a large arm chair in a state of rapid locomotion, strongly encouraging the latter hypothesis, this was followed by sundry specimens of crockery, jugs, basins, ewers, soap-dishes, and other utilitarian contrivances.

By no little exertion of agility, the dauntless Biron managed to escape from all these dangers, and at length gained the landing in safety, where a scene exhibiting a remarkable mixture of the terrible and the ludicrous presented itself.—

In a shirt torn almost to ribbands, with flashing eyes, and face of a deep purple tint, stood a man of the middle height and very muscular proportions, before the door of a room nearly opposite to the staircase; over the balusters of which he was in the act of launching a towel-stand with every indication of the wildest fury. He then rushed into his room and instantly returned with a pair of boots and a looking-glass, which he would have served in the same manner had not Mesmer stepped up to him, and fixing his eyes calmly upon him, said in an easy, unembarrassed manner—

“I would not throw the *glass* over, if I were you, because it might perhaps get broken” —

“ Ah !” said the maniac, (for that such he was must have been evident at a glance) very true, I did not think of that.”

“ I wish you could tell me what time it is ?” continued Biron, “ I have left my watch below.”

The maniac paused, he appeared to be trying to recollect, and two or three times made a dive with his hand into an imaginary waistcoat pocket, until evidently vexed at the unsuccessful result, he exclaimed impatiently,—

“ I am sorry I can't tell you, sir, but excuse me, I am very busy, I have a great deal more work to get through this morning.”

“ Can I assist you ?” said Mesmer, “ I have nothing particular to engage my attention just now.”

“ Why,” said the madman, “ I think you might help me a little. Suppose you carry the things out of the room and I throw them over, as you bring them to me ?”

“ Well that would be a very good plan,”

said the Count, "but do not you think it would be better if we were to take out all the things first on the landing, and have one grand smash, eh?"

"Ah, that is a fine idea!" said the madman eagerly, and they entered the room together.

Meanwhile, from the doors of every chamber in the passage protruded the heads of the occupants, who, attracted by the noise, had not, however, ventured to interfere with the proceedings of the lunatic, whose savage violence filled them with dismay and terror.

But Biron feared neither madmen nor anything else in the heavens above or in the earth below; he would have shaken hands with the fiend Arimanes in his hall of fire, could he have found his way thither, would have slept with the calmness of an innocent maiden beneath a spreading tree, in the midnight forest, where desperate robbers congregate, and deeds of blood are planned, amid horrid mirth, or in the gloomy catacombs, where grisly spectres

stalk, and pallid gauze-like ghosts yell their unearthly glees !

“ Is it absolutely necessary, then, to throw all the furniture down stairs ?” enquired Biron, gravely.

“ Why, yes ;” replied the maniac glancing cautiously around him, “ I do not see how it can be avoided ; the fact is,” and he approached Mesmer, and whispered mysteriously in his ear—“ the fact is, that they are so thin, they will hide themselves almost anywhere—there is no driving them out at all—there they have been now, chiefly under the bed, for the last three months, coiled up, with their heads in their mouths—it’s a wonder they don’t get the stitch in their sides or the cramp—there they are—little skeletons, you know, all bones—bones !” and the maniac nodded with great emphasis and sagacity—“ one of them is Susan, that used to be at the ‘ Green Lion,’ in Fleet-street ; it is quite extraordinary how they can live, never eating

anything but dirty boots and feathers—quite unaccountable !”

Mesmer agreed with him that there was no accounting for it, and they proceeded to remove the chairs and other smaller articles of furniture, when the madman suddenly declared that he was dreadfully thirsty, and should die in precisely three minutes and three quarters if he were not instantly supplied with some pure spring water ; thereupon rushing out upon the landing, he vociferated loudly, “ water, water, water !” in tones of the most thrilling anxiety.

Mesmer took this opportunity to draw the key from the inside of the door unperceived by the maniac, who still continued his demand for “ water.”

At length the waiters, the boots, and several other people seeing that no more furniture was thrown down stairs, and that the general aspect of affairs was becoming less dangerous, ventured to approach the lunatic who was in a

few moments surrounded by men and women, each holding glasses, bottles, and jugs of water in their hands, which they proffered with great assiduity.

All were, however, angrily rejected by the maniac, who declared that although he had crossed the desert a great many times he had never been in a worse *caravanserai* before. "Where was the spring? he would go and drink the water from the well!"

"There is some really pure water here," said Biron pointing to the corner of the room; the madman left the door-way; in another instant the door was closed and locked on the outside; he was a prisoner.

At this satisfactory termination of the adventure, everybody loudly applauded our hero's presence of mind.

Upon making inquiries, it appeared that the unfortunate gentleman had arrived the evening before in a perfectly sane state of mind, and had supped and gone to bed in a very rational

and quiet manner. Who or what he was, nobody was able to say, so Mesmer ordered breakfast in the coffee-room, and returned to his chamber, in order to complete his toilette, whilst the other ladies and gentlemen (the former especially) much shocked at the *deshabille* in which they confronted one another, hastened back to their chambers.

CHAPTER X.

THE BARGAIN.

WISE men make good breakfasts. They regard the matutinal meal as a good builder does the foundation of a house, upon which a safe and lasting superstructure may be raised, therefore they make it solid, and of strong proportions.

Mesmer de Biron entertained profoundly philosophic views upon this important point, and although he did not, like the now everlastingly

damned caliph of Bagdad, the wicked necromancer Vathek, indulge in three hundred dishes at a sitting, yet was he in his way by no means a contemptible gourmand.

The prospect of subsequently putting into execution a scheme of super-eminently refined and ingenious rascality, added, on the present, occasion, a double zest to our noble hero's appetite.

Eating and drinking are functions of the utmost importance ; life, the most valuable of our possessions, depends, as every one must be aware, upon their due and proper exercise.

It appears to me that the influence of nutriment and its varieties, upon the mind has hitherto been very insufficiently investigated.

For my part, next to what a man *does* and *thinks*, I regard what he *eats* as of the most paramount consequence. I shall, therefore, give an abridged detail of Count Mesmer de

Biron's breakfast, without further preface or apology.

It consisted of five courses. The first course comprised coffee, rolls, toast, mutton chops, fried soles and deviled kidneys.

The second was composed of chocolate, cold fowls and game, preserves, and potted meats.

The third, of a *demi-bouteille* of champagne and three roasted chesnuts.

The fourth, of the morning papers ; that is to say, Mesmer ran his eye over the columns of the *Times* and *Morning Chronicle*, and hung the *Post* over the back of a chair, by way of a fire-screen, thus for once actually making it useful in defiance of its decidedly anti-utilitarian idiosyncrasy.

The fifth and last course was represented by a splendid cigar, which Biron half smoked away, and threw the remaining portion at the nose of an old tom-cat who had strayed into the coffee-room.

Having accomplished this last feat with great satisfaction to himself personally, and the infinite annoyance of the poor persecuted quadruped, whose nose was most alarmingly scarified, he drew on his great coat, and prepared for a walk.

The morning was fine, but chilly, and our hero walked rapidly towards the street specified by the stranger at the café of the previous evening. Then having found the house in question, and seen at a glance that it far exceeded in value the sum mentioned by Cashall, he proceeded to knock and ring with considerable vehemence.

“Is Colonel Rossmill at home?” enquired Mesmer, who had ascertained the name from the Court Guide.

“Yes, sir,” said the footman.

“I wish to speak with him on business,” continued Biron.

“What name, sir?”

The Count gave his card, and in a few

minutes was ushered into a spacious and well furnished library.

A man of about eight and thirty, of a tall and majestic shape, arose as he entered, and bowing with great politeness, pointed to an easy chair of an inviting aspect, and requested Biron to be seated.

Mesmer complied, with a bow of equal politeness, and said —

“ I believe I have the pleasure of speaking with Colonel Rossmill ? ”

“ I am he,” replied the Colonel, “ pray will you explain the object of your visit ? ”

But before proceeding further in this conversation, it may be as well briefly to describe the person of the last speaker ; also, still more briefly the apartment wherein he spoke.

Colonel Rossmill, as already observed, was about eight and thirty years of age, his features were severely aquiline, his eyes black, large, and brilliantly keen ; his hair was the hue of

jet, and a slight baldness made his naturally high forehead appear still more so. He was moreover a man of excellent family, great talent, not unknown to literary fame and much addicted to scientific pursuits.

His library was less amply furnished with books than with machines and models of various kinds; air-pumps, electrifying-machines, vials, and crucibles in endless variety; galvanic batteries, telescopes, and skeletons, with an immense variety of phrenological casts of such varied forms and sizes, that any one unacquainted with the subject, would scarcely have conceived it possible that one human cranium should so prodigiously differ from another.

“I have been informed,” said Biron, in reply to the colonel’s query, “that you have some intention of disposing of this house.”

“It is the case,” said Colonel Rossmill.

“I wish to purchase a house,” resumed Biron, “in this part of the town, and I think

that this would suit me. By my father's death I have been recently left in the possession of some property, and I wish to live in a way more suitable to my rank than my poor father, who had but one fault, avarice, which, I am sorry to say, he carried to a most unreasonable extent."

"I should think he must have had very large acquisitiveness," said the colonel.

"No doubt of it," replied Biron, "I was quite surprised at the fortune he left me, considering how secluded and penuriously we had lived."

"You have not a *cast* of his head, I suppose?" said the phrenologist.

"No," replied Mesmer.

"That is a great pity."

"It is indeed—I always thought phrenology a most deeply interesting study, and had I had the means, should have prosecuted it with great ardor; but during my father's life time this was utterly impracticable, now, however

as soon as I can get a house I shall resume it with increased zeal. Indeed, I have some idea of forming a sort of museum of casts, beginning at the lowest and least sagacious of quadrupeds ascending to the greatest and most intellectual of men."

"An excellent plan!" exclaimed Colonel Rossmill, becoming every moment more prepossessed in favour of our hero, who knew so well how to touch the sympathetic chords of the human mind, and feigned so skilfully the warmest enthusiasm even for pursuits he in reality despised and detested, which however was by no means the case in the present instance.

"To each of these casts," continued he, "I would append the character of the person from whose head it was taken, and I conceive that in the teeth of such evidence few would be sufficiently bold to dispute the truth of this glorious science."

"One would fancy not," said the colonel "if we did not know from sad experience the

tremendous difficulties involved in the establishment of the simplest and most palpable truths."

"And yet," said Mesmer, "how many absurdities do the generality of mankind receive as indisputable facts, without requiring even the shadow of proof or testimony, merely because they were inculcated in youth, backed by the prejudice of education, or supported by the countenance of antiquity."

"The shield of unnumbered follies in every age!" rejoined Rossmill.

"True," said Biron, "and saves logic, which to those who have none at hand, is often monstrously convenient.—But to return to business—the house I mean."

And our designing hero affected to look at his watch as if his time were valuable in the highest degree, or he had some most important appointment in immediate prospect.

"Really I must apologise for my digression," said Colonel Rossmill.

“ Pray do nothing of the kind,” interrupted Biron, “ phrenology is quite my mania, and nothing would more delight me than to compare notes with one who has evidently dived so profoundly into the springs of the science ; but this morning I am unfortunately pressed for time.”

“ I am sure I should be most happy at any other time, if you would favor me with a call,” said Roessmill.

“ Nothing would give me greater pleasure,” responded Biron.

“ Well then, with regard to the house, the fact is this ; I have no family, my wife has been dead for some years, and I find this house much more spacious than I require, besides being very expensive, and owing to the extraordinary conduct of a brother-in-law of mine, I have lately had very heavy demands upon my purse—you see that cast---remark the large *benevolence*---the tremendous *destruc-iveness*, and the total want of *acq uisitiveness*.”

“ In truth a most unfortunate combination !” exclaimed Mesmer.

“ Unfortunate indeed, but see, worse than all, the very moderate *conscientiousness*.”

The ‘ man without a conscience ’ smiled sardonically as the colonel uttered these last words, and took from them a useful hint for his after conduct.

“ That cast is my poor brother-in-law’s,” continued Rossmill almost mournfully, “ how can I blame him for actions, which, with organs thus developed, are, according to my convictions, inevitable.”

“ How, indeed,” said Mesmer.

“ Well,” continued the colonel, “ for the reasons I have stated, I wish to sell the lease of the house, which has still some eighty years to run, but unfortunately my title to the property is disputed.”

Here Colonel Rossmill entered into details, which would prove but little interesting to the reader, and as they are quite irrelevant to this

history, I shall not here enter into their discussion.

“It appears to me,” said Biron, when the phrenologist had concluded his statement, “that your title is quite valid notwithstanding all you have stated——”

“But I must forewarn you,” said the colonel, who like Brutus was ‘an honorable man,’ that my solicitor, Mr. Monville, expresses great doubt upon the subject, and indeed, the dread of a lawsuit, which above all things I hold in unqualified abhorrence, was an additional reason for my disposal of the house.”

“Nevertheless,” said Mesmer, “I am quite willing to purchase the property, though of course the contingency of a lawsuit must in some degree influence its value.”

“Well,” said Rossmill, “as there is this danger impending, and ready money is an object to me at the present moment——”

“I see,” said Mesmer, smiling, “that your *secretiveness* is very small.”

“Very, there is my head,” replied Ross-mill, pointing to one of the casts; the fact is I never could keep a secret, and many are the misfortunes which my frankness has brought upon myself and others—but to resume—my solicitor advises me to part with this house at any price --- even for twelve hundred pounds.”

Luckily,” said the wily count, “I have just about that sum at immediate command, so that if you are willing to close the bargain and will give me your solicitor’s address the matter may be arranged at once. I will give *my* solicitor his instructions regarding the purchase without delay.”

“Be it so then,” said the colonel, who being really in great want of money, was much pleased with our hero’s promptness, and taking a pen he proceeded to write upon a card the following address,—

MR. MONVILLE,

— STREET, BEDFORD ROW.

“ Then I will wish you good morning,” said Mesmer, shaking hands with Colonel Rossmill in the most friendly manner.

“ Good morning, and remember, if you feel inclined to inspect my collection of skulls and casts, I shall be most happy to explain their histories.”

“ Be assured that I shall speedily avail myself of your kind offer.”

“ Well then, Count de Biron, I will not detain you any longer from your appointment.”

“ Good morning.”——

But at the moment Mesmer was about to effect his exit the door opened---and the beauty of the Haymarket stood before him !

CHAPTER XI.

THE INVITATION.

“ My niece, Miss Augusta Merlmore---
Count de Biron,” said Colonel Rossmill.

Mesmer bowed, and drew back, for Miss Merlmore’s sudden entrance had almost brought them into bodily contact. But the fair girl, who could not have yet counted twenty summers, blushed and shrunk embarrassed beneath the glance of fierce admiration which flashed from the dark eyes of the stranger.

“Surely I have the devil’s luck as well as my own!” thought Biron exultingly, “but it will not do to leave this house without pursuing the advantage fate so obligingly throws in my way---fires of heaven! how exquisitely lovely are her features, what divine grace in her form!”

“Excuse my troubling you,” said Mesmer aloud, “but as I see,”---here he looked at his gold Geneva watch, which by the way he had forgotten to wind up, on the previous evening---“as I see that I am too late for my appointment, I should, if it would not be considered intrusive, very much like to see the drawing rooms---they must be fine rooms, to judge by the front of the house---”

“They *are* fine apartments, Count de Biron,” said the colonel, “and were newly papered and decorated scarcely a year ago, I should like you to see them, pray step upstairs at once.”

And Rossmill himself led the way to the *belle étage* of the mansion,

“ I wonder,” thought Biron, “ whether she is living with the colonel, or merely here on a visit---Augusta Merlmore, what a delightful name---beautiful Augusta !”

“ The size of the rooms exceed my anticipations ;” said he again aloud, “ they are truly princely.”

“ How do you like the paper ?”

“ Oh ! admirable, it is *cóleur de rose*, like the bright hopes and ardent feelings of our youth, before they are stained more darkly by experience and the rude contact of the world.”

“ But you are yet young to have arrived at so an undesirable a consummation ?” said Colonel Rossmill.

“ I was not alluding to myself,” said Mesmer with a sigh, that left much to be inferred. “ Hitherto I have led a life of seclusion, little consonant to with my disposition, so that my experience is rather of books than of men.”

“ Those arched folding doors with the Corinthian columns on either side were an im-

provement of my own," said the colonel, "what do you think of them?"

"Nothing could more efficiently testify to your taste, they are perfectly classic---but I see you have some fine pictures here—Ah! that water-colour sketch is inimitable, it is one of Prout's I presume?"

"Then I am afraid you must resign your pretensions as a connoisseur. It is one of my niece Augusta's," said Rossmill, evidently much pleased.

"Is it possible?"

Then turning to Miss Merlmore, our hero said in that deep, soft tone which gave such a fascination to his utterance,——

"I will not say more of your work, what I *have* said, you must believe my genuine opinion; were I now to add the praises which hover on my tongue, you might imagine that I wished to flatter—a vice of all others I most intensely deprecate!"

Augusta blushed. Again she could not

help confessing that he was handsome; there was she imagined an unaffected grace, a youthful enthusiasm in his manners, which, in contradistinction to the coxcombry of so many of the young men she was accustomed to meet, appeared irresistibly engaging.

“Then his name, thus ran her secret thoughts, how poetical, how mystic, how aristocratic---Count de Biron---I wonder what is his christian name!”

“So she is his niece,” thought Mesmer; Colonel Rossmill seems destined to be useful to me in more ways than one.”

“Will you take a little lunch with us?” said the Colonel, as much pleased as Augusta at the count’s admiration of her painting, “we are just about to have some.”

“With pleasure,” said Biron; “to be candid, as I have missed the appointment I alluded to, and am engaged to dine with my friend Sir John Templeton, at seven, I positively did not know what to do with myself in the

interim. I know so few people in London, for my poor father, whose avarice almost amounted to monomania, avoided all society but that of traders and speculators, to which I felt an equally powerful aversion. Hitherto, absorbed in my studies, I have never felt the want of friends so much as at the present moment, when their deficiency almost neutralizes my other advantages as to property and rank."

"By the way," said Colonel Rossmill, "your family is of course French, to judge by the spelling of your name and your title."

"No, the countship is Russian, and was given to my grandfather for some secret services of a diplomatic nature---I never knew the precise particulars---my father altogether dropped the title, not having originally the means to support it, and afterwards from regarding it as a bar to his favourite pursuits, but all the papers were preserved---and I imagine no one

can find fault with me for resuming my just right."

"Far from blaming you, I admire your spirit."

"Will you take a pinch of snuff?" said Biron, "this box was given to the first Count de Biron from the Emperor's own hand at St. Petersburg --- it is of platinum lined with gold."

"The workmanship is admirable," said Colonel Rossmill.

"Pray allow me to look at it," said Augusta.

Mesmer felt, when she returned it, that it had now acquired a value independent of its intrinsic worth, nay, that had it really been the donation of the august personage he represented, it could not have been prized more highly than since it had been honored by the touch of Augusta Merlmore's hand.

"Then you are of English family?" said

the colonel, whose phrenological organism rendered him very inquisitive.

“Undoubtedly, I am a true John Bull; indeed, from the researches I have made, I entertain little doubt but that the Biron and Byron families originally sprung from the same stock---the spelling of so many names has been corrupted since the conquest.”

“Well I am glad you are an Englishman, let me feel your head.” And the enthusiastic phrenologist forthwith commenced operations.

“Humph! moderate adhesiveness, amative-ness and philoprogenitiveness *very* large.”

Miss Merlmore blushed and smiled at her uncle’s scientific enthusiasm.

“Stay,” said Mesmer “you are trespassing on forbidden ground; what! do you imagine that I, a confirmed believer in phrenology, am willing to permit any one to acquaint themselves with all the defects and weaknesses in my character. No, no! my maxim in science is — experimentalise upon others but

content *yourself* with the wisdom to be derived from their deductions."

"I beg your pardon," said the colonel laughing, "you are quite right, however I have gathered something from my attack upon your cranium---you will make a good friend, and---a still better lover!"

"I am glad to hear you say so," exclaimed Biron gaily; at the same time he rejoiced that he had stopped the colonel in time to prevent him from weighing his deficiency in the development of the moral organs, of which he was fully conscious, and which, although rather a merit in his own estimation, he was well aware was looked upon as precisely the reverse by the generality of the world.

At length Mesmer rose to depart, promising to call at once upon his solicitor, and speak to him about the purchase of the house.

"Really Colonel Rossmill," said he with well assumed *naïveté*, as he shook him by

the hand, "I could almost fancy we were old friends of many years' standing. I shall not forget your promise about the casts."

"I can assure you, Count, that I should be delighted to cultivate your acquaintance ; by the bye, we have a few friends coming on Wednesday evening, and if you are not better engaged--"

"I *am* engaged," replied Biron, "but not *better* engaged, so I shall send an excuse to old Mrs. Sinclair as soon as I get home. She is a distant relation of mine and very rich, but her parties are dull and formal, so *a revoir !*"

He bowed gracefully to Augusta and was gone.

"Well, Augusta," said Colonel Rossmill, "I must say I think this young Count de Biron one of the most agreeable young men I have encountered for some time past, and he certainly has a fine manly bearing and most

expressive eyes, though his features are almost effeminate."

"Oh! he is very handsome!" interrupted the unsophisticated Augusta.

"He seemed to think *you* so at any rate, to judge by his looks said the Colonel smiling.

"Do you think so?"

"Think so! I have studied human nature, physiognomy in particular, and could not be mistaken in the pleasure which flashed from those soft dark eyes of his, when he accepted the invitation; they rested upon you."

"Well, who knows but I may be the Countess de Biron some day or other," said Augusta laughingly.

"He is about to buy this house, and form an establishment; from the hints, too, which he quite unintentionally let drop, he must be possessed of considerable property," rejoined the Colonel in a meditative tone.

"Why what a speculative creature you

are !” exclaimed his niece playfully, and then stopping abruptly with a look which encouraged him to proceed.”

“ I think he would make you a very good match,” resumed uncle Rossmill.

“ Don’t you think he is too young to marry ?” said Augusta.

“ Too young ! why should he—too young—I suppose he is at least two or three and twenty.”

“ Oh, I only *thought*—you know you told my brother Theodore, who is nearly *five* and twenty, that he was too young to *dream* of such a thing !”

“ So I did, you little pup, but then he wanted to marry a girl without a farthing, having next to nothing himself—a young nobleman of independent fortune is quite another affair.”

“ Ah ! I see, ‘ men, not measures’ as Mr. D’Israeli virtuously says.”

“ How do you know what he says ?”

“ I read the debates in the Times.”

“ Girls should not read the newspapers.”

“ And why not ?”

“ Because they are full of things, they ought to know nothing about.”

“ That which is evil for a girl to know is evil for a man,” said Augusta.

“ Nonsense, child ; men are compelled to know much that is evil, in order to protect themselves against it ; women are made to be protected by men.”

“ And oppressed.”

“ You little termagant, I will not go with you to the opera to-morrow, if you attack me with any of your rights of women and emancipating theories.”

“ Then I’ll set Mrs. W—— at you on Wednesday.”

“ No, no ; anything but that ! By the way what a delightful frankness and total absence of affectation there is in the young Count’s manner.”

“ To a degree—he quizzed me through his

opera glass for a full hour without interruption, last night, at the theatre."

"Indeed? Where was he seated?"

"In one of the stalls."

"That accounts for your looking so earnestly towards the orchestra, as I imagined."

"Nonsense, uncle—by the way, Prince Aurelius is coming on Wednesday; how admirably he will agree with Count de Biron."

"He will; and do you know the Count's name—his christian name, I mean?"

"No; what is it? George, after the great bard?"*

"No; a most extraordinary name; you would never guess it."

* "'Mongst them were several Englishmen of pith,
Sixteen called Thomson and nineteen called Smith.
Jack Thomson and Bill Thomson—all the rest
Had been called '*Jemmy*,' after the great bard."

DON JUAN.

“ Then I will not try, so I give it up at once.”

“ His name is MESMER—Count Mesmer de Biron.”

“ And Prince Aurelius is such a mesmerist ; oh, how charming !—and does the Count mesmerise ?”

“ I do not know ; but he is a great student of Phrenology.”

“ Then if he is not so already, he can soon learn.”

“ Yes, and you will become his patient at once, that he may lose no time.”

“ Of course, and go off into the most beautiful trance, and see visions, and prophesy the day he will be married on, and I do not know what besides,” cried the lively Augusta throwing back her long dark ringlets, and laughing in a most bewitching manner.

“ Well, we shall see ; I must now go and write some letters.”

“ And I shall go to the piano.”

Augusta seated herself at the instrument, and sang, in a beautiful contralto voice, a popular German air, the *refrain* whereof ran as follows :—

“ Thine is my heart, thine is my heart !
And shall be thine for ever !”

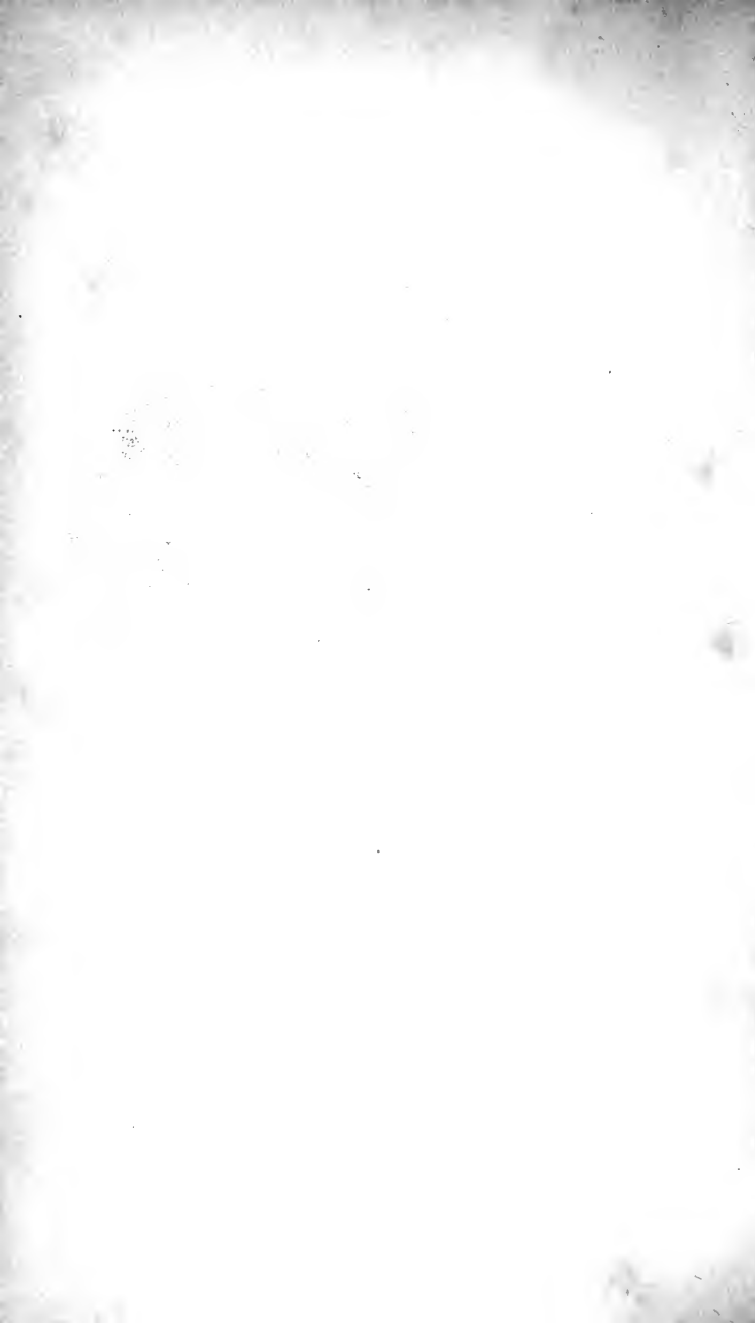
AUGUSTA.

PHRENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

Fine mixed temperament, beautifully developed forehead, rising high at benevolence. The organ of Music gently swelling into Ideality. The perceptive faculties, especially Form, Size, and Color, large. Comparison, and Wit well developed. All the organs of the moral sentiments largely developed. The affections large, and only moderate Love of approbation and Self esteem. Great conscientiousness (giving high moral principle) and moderate Firmness. The sides of the head at Secretiveness, Destructiveness, Combaticiveness and Acquisitiveness but moderately developed, shewing the predominance of the sentiments, affections and intellect.



AUGUSTA



CHAPTER XII.

THE ATTORNEY.

WITH a gait proudly triumphant, the designing Mesmer walked for some yards from the door of Colonel Rossmill, in a sort of ecstasy of self satisfaction, his countenance displaying a half repressed smile, which would have done credit to the most subtle of diplomatists.

“ Yes,” thought he, “ my friend Lucifer—I always thought him the greatest hero ever

conceived by the imagination of a poet— Satan was right—

“ Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven.”

Better to be the prince of liars, the deceiver of all deceivers, the arch impostor of one's age, than to plod on in dark and monotonous obscurity, without excitement, hope, or pleasure, like a stupid worm. Impostor ! I glory in the term which marks me the superior in art and intellect to the race I dupe and—despise. I triumph in the impenetrable veil which wraps my being, whilst at a glance I pierce the deceit and hypocrisy of the creatures I mingle with. I laugh to see them play their petty cards so insanelly. ‘ The world's a stage,’ and I am to myself at once the hero and the audience. Like the invisible prince in the story book, I see unseen—I mark unnoticed, and, unrestrained by prejudice or country, relations or profession, part or sympathy with

human follies, I roam the earth a free and fearless spirit quaffing the cup of bliss wherever offered, indifferent to the opinion of mankind, and daily realising the Spartan motto, "Eat drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die!"

Turning the corner of a street, a cab-stand burst upon our hero's view; he hailed the foremost of the row, and sprang with the agility of his age into the ubiquitous vehicle.

"Drive me to —— street, Bedford Row, and quickly!" said Biron; and away they rattled over the stones.

There is, perhaps, no time or place better adapted to the rosy dreams and soft meditations of love than the solitary occupation of a conveyance upon wheels. The rumbling of the machinery, the clatter of the horses' hoofs, the occasional jolts, and above all the rapidity of motion vehemently assist the exertions of the imagination—indeed I have heard of a po-

pular author whose inventive faculties, without this peculiar stimulus, are almost totally dormant, his ideas requiring, as it were, to be jerked and shaken out of his brain like pepper from a cruet ; not that they resemble pepper in any other respect ; still as that indispensable spice dots the surface of a plate of cucumber, so do these mis-begotten ideas serve to chequer the pages of a magazine and the thoughts of the unthinking subscribers.

The fancy of Biron during his progress in the cab was incessantly occupied with the image of the beautiful Augusta Rossmill ; he pictured her in every attitude ; feature by feature, he recapitulated her charms, and he swore—he was addicted to that impious practice—he swore by the throne of the Persian devil, Eblis, that she should be his ere many months were gone, and that still fewer days should fade before he pressed impassioned kisses on her rosy lips, and forced her to confess his love returned ! He swore, and the

cab suddenly coming to a stop at the door of Mr. Monville's residence, aroused him from his delightful reflections.

"Are you going to stop long, sir?" said the cabman, before whose imagination danced visionary pots of porter at the corner.

"We have stopped short already," replied Mesmer; "wait for me here."

He entered the house, and knocked at a door on which "Clerk's Office," was inscribed in large and legible characters.

The door opened, and an elderly man in a threadbare suit of black, with a bald head, and a pen in his mouth, made his appearance.

"Is Mr. Monville at home?" enquired Mesmer.

"Yes, sir, he is," replied the bald-headed clerk in measured accents.

"Can I see him?"

"No, sir, I'm afraid not, responded the clerk, shaking his head portentously; he is very particularly engaged with several gen-

tlemen, on very particular business, and gave particular orders that he was not to be disturbed on any account, however particular the business might be."

"My business is more particular than theirs, and I am more particular than any body else in London, said Mesmer coolly, so take up my card, and say I must see him at once, on business most particularly particular."

The bald clerk stared for a moment at the audacious client; concluding, however, from his dress and manner that he must be a personage of great importance, he took the card, and telling a boy in the office with some confusion to "give 'my lordship' a chair," he disappeared with the message.

In a few moments he reappeared and requested 'my lordship' to walk up stairs and take the first door to the left, in which apartment he found Mr. Monville, the man he had seen at the Café de l'Europe the night before

seated alone in a high-backed chair with a table covered with papers tied up in red tape after the manner of all sublunary attorneys and solicitors.

What had become of the particular clients was hard to conjecture ; there were no back stairs by which they could have escaped ; the windows were rather too high for a leap, not to weigh the improbability of such a wonderful course of proceeding, they could scarcely have retreated to the iron safe in the corner ; in fine, Biron was driven to the inevitable conclusion that they were mere creatures of the imagination of the bald-headed clerk, created by that gentleman's exuberant fantasy with the view of enhancing the importance of himself, his master, and his master's overwhelming accumulation of legal business.

" You do not know me ?" said de Biron.

" I certainly have not that pleasure," replied Mr. Monville in the most honied accents.

“Then I have the advantage of you,” said Mesmer quietly.

The attorney smiled as much as to say that that was no very easy matter.

“Really,” he began, “I do not remember where I have had the felicity.”

“Of course not; it was last night, at the Café de l’Europe.”

“I did not see you.”

“No, I dare say not; but *I* saw, and besides that *heard*, I may say *overheard* you.”

“Indeed, sir, and pray what connection has that extraordinary fact, which, to say the least—”

“The less said the better,” interrupted Biron perceiving that Mr. Monville was growing red in the face and waxing irate with alarming rapidity, a climax he wished to avoid, “I overheard nothing that will not be to your credit.”

The last word was uttered in a tone

which threw a veil of ambiguity over its meaning, by no means displeasing to Mr. Monville.

"Pray proceed," said that sagacious person with increasing politeness.

"Briefly then," said Mesmer, "I have determined to buy Colonel Rossmill's house ; it will precisely suit me, and is, besides, as you are aware, a very good investment for one's money."

Monville stared.

The placid, gentlemanlike assurance of our hero was a shade beyond his experience ; Biron's superior rascality confounded him, and checked the familiarity he might otherwise have ventured upon.

"I have seen Colonel Rossmill," continued Biron, "I did not think it necessary to allude to your jesting remarks to your friend Mr. Cashall, which I quite unintentionally overheard ; you will lose no time in getting the

affair settled with my solicitor, I mean create no unnecessary delay."

"Certainly not," said Monville, somewhat shocked at finding his professional character in the power of a man evidently disposed to make the most of every piece of information, no matter how obtained.

"Then I wish you a good morning," said the Count, with an amiable smile; and Biron forthwith quitted the apartment.

"I am glad he is gone", thought the lawyer, "there's something devilish about those dark eyes of his; that pretty face and musical voice contrast uncomfortably with such infernal cunning and hypocrisy. I am no better or honester than many myself; but this man seems to swindle *con amore*—he's a d——d scoundrel, I think!"

This was something like the case of the omnibus conductor, who, on a passenger alighting one evening, called out to the driver—

"All right, Jack, it's half a sovereign; go on!"

After a little while he angrily exclaimed—

"I say, Jack, it's all wrong, that d——d feller has *cheated* us—it's half a farthing!"

Something like this was said by the coloring artist as he looked at an ornate, half-sovereign. Having no silver or copper to hand, the man swore and threatened to cheat him and refused to change it. Altho. much abused and very near for nothing. Threatened to denounce him for refusing the money but did not.

CHAPTER XIII.

DINNER IN LEICESTER-SQUARE.—COINCIDENCE,

“Now for my dinner with Sir John Templeton,” thought Mesmer, “I wonder whether there is such a title in the baronetage---no matter---drive to the Hotel de Provence, Leicester-Square,” added he aloud for the benefit of the cabman, who sprang to his box, lashed his rosinante, and set off at a canter.

Whenever by any chance I find myself

in Leicester-Square I cannot help fancying myself on the Continent, and, should I take it into my head to dine at one of the restaurants with which it abounds, talk French to the *garçon* as perseveringly as if it were really necessary.

Mesmer de Biron could not well fancy himself on the Continent, never having since his birth been more than ten miles from the Bank of England; but he knew Leicester-Square well, as indeed he was tolerably versed in the geography of every portion of the modern Babylon, and he knew that excellent French cooks not unfrequently lurked within the kitchens of those dingy, inhospitable looking buildings.

A strange place is Leicester-Square---now for a description a la Dickens. A strange place is Leicester-Square, with its quaint lamp-posts, and its wondrous exhibitions and places of amusements, shooting-galleries and gymnastic-rooms, not otherwise easily attain-

able. Its policemen, and its applewomen, and grotesque juveniles in their ragged habiliments. Mustachoed Frenchmen and Germans with interminable pipes, there find a habitation ; bill-stickers are rarely at a loss for paling on which to paste their monstrous placards. Oh ! a nice, out of the way, odd sort of place is the Square of Leicester !

The cab stopped at the Hotel de Provence, which, by the way, is a corner house. The words "*Restaurant au Premier*," appeared above the door, and after ascending with some difficulty, owing to the darkness pervading, a staircase with as many turns and windings as a moderate sized boa constrictor, our hero found himself in the coffee-room.

This was a long, wedge-shaped apartment, well furnished with looking-glasses and tables covered with snow white cloths and the other necessary preparations for dining.

Owing, however, to the peculiar shape of the room, the tables had been made of a con-

formation equally peculiar, until at the narrowest extremity thereof they absolutely verged on the triangular.

The only human occupant of the room was a gentleman with redundant black hair, and a rough great coat, who sat in a luxurious attitude, rocking himself in a chair opposite the fire, with his feet on the fender, and his hands buried in the depths of his pockets.

I said the only *human* occupant, because there was also a large mastiff seated opposite to the fire, who occasionally rubbed his nose against his master's great coat in a grave and meditative manner, as if to shew his sympathy in the feelings with which he instinctively felt the mind of his master to be occupied. Perhaps there is no epoch of the day at which men and dogs so nearly agree in their mode of thinking, as during the hour preceding the appearance of dinner.

Mesmer ordered a good refection, consisting of eleven dishes, which unusual extravagance

caused the waiter to regard him with an air of gradually deepening respect, amounting almost to veneration, when Biron furthermore directed him to bring Sherry, Hock, Champagne, and Chateau Margeaux, with the dessert.

Even the gentleman in the rough great coat at the fire leant back and looked over his head backwards at our hero, whose voracity excited his admiration as well as that of his four-footed companion, who thought it advisable to get upon terms of friendship with a man who had ordered so extensive a dinner, and accordingly introduced himself to Mesmer's notice, by brushing against his legs and adorning them with sundry depositions of mud from his paws.

"Growler ! come here, you rascal," said the owner of the offending animal with some sternness in his tone, " I am afraid he has covered you with mud."

" Oh, never mind," said the Count smiling ;

I am not going to a rendezvous this evening, so it is of little consequence ; but what a splendid animal it is ; I do not remember that I have ever seen a larger."

"Nor I," replied the stranger, who was a man of about forty, with a handsome, open countenance, dark brilliant eyes, and whiskers completely encircling his countenance, until beneath his chin they mingled with a long pair of black moustaches and a beard of sable luxuriance, "except, by the way, his twin brother, which I gave to my brother-in-law, Colonel Rossmill."

"Colonel Rossmill !" exclaimed Biron, why, I have not long since left his house, which, by the way, I am about to purchase."

"Did you see his niece?" enquired the stranger.

"See her !" cried Biron enthusiastically, "Yes ! I saw the ideal of all that is fascinating and lovely in woman ; if etiquette per-

mitted it, I would lay myself and fortune at her feet to-morrow, and make her the Countess de Biron the day after."

"Stop, I entreat you, my dear sir, said the stranger, laughing---*I am her father.*"

"Indeed," said Biron, affecting to start in great confusion, "pray excuse the freedom I have taken with the name of your daughter, of course I had no idea——"

"Not another word, my dear sir,"! said Mr. Merlmore, laughing, "of course I shall consider your words as unsaid."

"By no means," said Mesmer frankly, I always say what I mean, and I do not hesitate to tell you, whatever may be the result, that the hope of meeting your daughter has been, since some four and twenty hours the brightest object of my existence. I dare say you think me a very extraordinary unceremonious personage, but to say the truth I never could assume the cold calculating affectation of the man of fashion, and rather than take the

trouble to play the hypocrite, I endure all the evils which my careless openness entails upon me."

"It must lead you into strange adventures sometimes," said Mr. Merlmore, who already began to feel the serpentine fascination exercised by our hero upon all who came in contact with him."

"Sometimes," replied Mesmer, "yet in the long run I find it succeeds---much I suppose on the principle that the man who takes dummy at whist wins the game of his opponents."

"Well this is an adventure," said Merlmore, "and allow me to add, as far as I am concerned, a pleasant one. I hate solitude, and of all things I detest dining alone.---A friend was to have met me here, but he seems to have forgotten his engagement, at any rate we may as well dine together."

"With pleasure," said Biron. "I quite agree with you as to solitude, which even the

best of dinners can scarcely render agreeable—and strange to say I too have been disappointed in a meeting.”

“ Here comes the soup,” said Merlmore.

“ My acquaintance with your brother-in-law is of very recent date, by the way,” said Biron, as soon as they were seated; and he proceeded to detail the particulars of his visit, as also the fact of his recognizing in Augusta the fair one who had so fascinated him at the theatre.

“ A most romantic conjunction of circumstances!” said Merlmore — “are you a fatalist, by the bye?”

“ No,” said Mesmer, “I am not.”

“ Perhaps you dislike the term fatalist and prefer that of necessarian.”

“ No,” said Biron, “I am not a necessarian.”

“ You imagine, perhaps, that such a doctrine is destructive of religion.”

“ Doubtless it *must* be so.”

“Pardon me,” said Merlmore, “I should not have spoken so freely—but I assure you I never wish to offend the religious prejudices—opinions I mean of anybody.”

“You cannot offend mine,” said Mesmer, “*I have none.*”

“Oh!” said Merlmore, a little surprised at the ultra candid admission, “then what have you to oppose to necessarianism, you surely do not mean to say that anything can happen without a cause.”

“I cannot tell—certainly not in the material world with which we are acquainted, but I believe in the supremacy of mind over matter and in the creative powers of the mind.”

“Do you mean that the mind can create from nothing?”

“Perhaps—but do not try to dissuade me from my free will. I have made up my mind that my being is *not* a machine, in which case it would not be worth having, nor will I yield

to all the arguments in existence, or yet to be brought into existence the volition I momentarily exercise."

"You fancy you exercise it, but in reality it is equally the slave of circumstance, after all, truth is a matter of some importance."

"Is it?"

"It is the object of all speculative philosophy—but you substitute imagination for reason."

"I prefer it."

"On what grounds?"

"It affords me greater pleasure."

"But, my dear sir, after all one can but believe what one is convinced of."

"I am convinced."

"But how *can* you be convinced in the teeth of all sound logic."

"I do not believe in the existence of sound logic."

"You are enough to drive a man mad--"

"Suppose logic leads to a false conclu-

“ Then it is not sound.”

“ So say I—now you allow that space is infinitely divisible — how then is motion or indeed time possible?”

“ The old syllogism ?” *

* It is barely possible that some of my fair readers may be unacquainted with Zeuo's two celebrated puzzles. The one affirms that motion is impossible, because as soon as you had covered half a certain distance, there would yet remain *half*, when you had covered *that* half, *still* half of the space would remain, and so on ad infinitum. The other supposes a race between Achilles and a tortoise, the latter to have a mile's start. Now, when Achilles reached the end of the mile, the tortoise would have progressed a short distance ; by the time Achilles arrived at the end of that distance it would have got a little farther, and so again to all eternity. Diogenes rose and *walked* to disprove it, but the proof was no better than a knock on the head is of the existence of matter ; as an imaginary knock, in sleep for instance, would convey the same sensation. We have never seen these puzzling questions answered, though many have fancied they have done so. But this is not the place to discuss the laws of motion, nor would our readers' patience suffer such digression.

“ Old — but not disproved, however, to shew that the doctrine of necessity is a bad one—See what this discussion has brought us—three cold dishes !”

A pause ensued ; devoted to the discussion of the well-dressed viands, and the argument was resumed with unabated vigour as the claret and dessert made their appearance.

“ The doctrine of necessity is degrading,” said Biron

“ But true, nevertheless,” said Merlmore.

“ But by willing or imagining a thing, we may often cause it.”

“ Yes, but there must be a cause which led to our imagining or willing.”

“ I can imagine a thing that never existed, for instance a Bengal tiger in top boots walk-upon a house-top ?”

“ You merely combine what you have actually witnessed under other circumstances.”

“ Then you allow that the mind *has* a power of combination, and you are doubtless

acquainted with the rule of Geometrical progression."

"What then?"

"The creative or combining powers of the mind are without limits."

"Granted, but there must always be a cause for this combining or creating

"I have but to wish or resolve to do so."

"That wish or resolve cannot exist without an antecedent cause—indeed would any one undertake the task, we might doubtless trace, through the whole life of an individual from the earliest impressions at, or even before birth, to his dying day, the inevitable, result of causes, over which he had no more controul than I over the universe."

"Then why exert oneself, why not sit down quietly and take our chance of good or evil?"

"Why not? — because causes already in existence, our circumstances, necessities, in-

clinations, determine otherwise; a man feels hungry because he requires food—he seeks food because he is hungry.”

“ But suppose he does not seek it?”

“ He starves; his obstinate opposition to a law of nature costs him his life, yet this obstinacy must have had a cause.”

“ For instance an argument like the present.”

“ Precisely.”

Biron now affected to remain for some minutes in a deep reverie, as if musing over a philosophy to which in his heart he had long sincerely subscribed, but which he had chosen either from whim or self interest, or some other ‘*cause* over which he had no controul’ to dispute and impugn; then suddenly seizing the hand of the necessarian, he said with a frank ingenuousness irresistibly prepossessing——

“ You have convinced me! how could I be so blind as to deny for an instant the truth of a system so rational and self evident!”

Merlmore looked delighted, a convert gained after a hard struggle is a great triumph to philosophic vanity.

“ And now let us have some supper,” said the ‘ man *without a conscience.*’

CHAPTER XIV.

USEFUL HINTS.

THE moment Mr. Merlmore had alluded to Colonel Rossmill's niece, Biron with intuitive sagacity suspected the truth. He had a keen eye for family likenesses, or as Colonel Rossmill would have expressed himself, 'very large comparison,' and he observed instantaneously an affinity between the eyes and forehead of the stranger in the coffee-room, and the beautiful Augusta Merlmore.

In all Mesmer's sayings and doings, there was a strange mixture of passionate impulse and unfathomable cunning, of candid truth and desperate falsehood; and this it was which enabled him to act his assumed character so perfectly as to evade even the shadow of suspicion. He was so young too and so beautiful, that it would have appeared a positive sin to have suspected him of hypocrisy. The only feature in which his true character was at all evident, was his mouth which though beautifully chiselled as that of the Apollo, had a peculiar sarcastic curl more or less developed at various times; and even this was concealed by his moustache from the scrutiny of the observant.

"You are not in the army, Count, I suppose?" said Merlmore growing more and more intimate under the influence of the wine.

"Allah forbid!" exclaimed Biron; "I am not a younger brother---and who but younger brothers would rush into that refuge for the

destitute? No! I am free as the mountain breeze, 'lord of myself that heritage of woe,' I live for pleasure, and I bank at Coutts's."

"Doubtless the most agreeable mode of life; somewhat similar to the course *I* pursued, and once lost thirty thousand pounds by."

"How so?"

"Why, a rich old uncle of mine, having no children, left sixty thousand pounds between my brother and my daughter, saying that the reason he left it to her, instead of me was, that I was not fit to be trusted with ready money."

"An old cormorant!"

"Yes, it was too bad; and to prove that my brother was still less fit to be trusted, he first lost all his fortune by an absurd speculation, and then went mad. I was only six-and-twenty at the time my uncle died, and just married and a father, so that some allowances might have been made, especially as

the allowance made me by *my* father was so confoundedly scanty."

"You had no profession, then?"

"Oh, yes; I was to have been a lawyer, and was, in fact, called to the bar; but as I never got a brief, I might as well have let it alone and saved, or even spent the money wasted on my noviciate."

"What say you to some cigars?"

"My mania—I have been living abroad for some years past—suppose we adjourn to a smoking locale."

Accordingly, having paid their bill, they put on their hats, and departed.

"Are you living in London, by the way?" said Mesmer.

"I purpose doing so, and have, in fact, come up to make arrangements for the reception of my family; I only arrived last night, and am staying at Green's Hotel."

"And I at Pink's," said Biron.

“ Can you come and breakfast with me to-morrow ?”

“ At what hour ?”

“ Eleven precisely.”

“ I will be as punctual as a tax-gatherer.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE WAITER'S TALE.

ON reaching home at a remarkably early hour, considering his youth and temperament, the noble count proceeded to order a bottle of soda water and sherry, which in due time made their appearance in the hands of an attendant spirit of the place, *vulgo* a waiter, in whose countenance was very evidently to be traced a strong disposition to communicate some fact or facts of the utmost interest and impor-

tance. He only wanted to be encouraged in order, like the boa constrictor, to unfold his tale.

Biron perceiving this, remarked that it was somewhat chilly in a sort of half soliloquizing tone, and looked in the direction of the waiter.

“ Yes, sir,” said that worthy, “ it is reether chilly, as you say, sir ; *we’ve* bin in ’ot water enough though, since this morning.”

“ Indeed ; why, what has been the matter ?”

“ Ah, sir, the mad gentleman in No. 14, has bin a-kicking hup such a dust. You hadn’t bin gone long, afore he calls out through the key ’ole in the most insiniwatin’ tones—‘ Let me out, if you please, my good people ; the fit’s over now, and won’t come on again for I don’t know how long.’ ”

“ Won’t it,’ says hi, “ catch us letting you get another smash at the blessed furnitur !”

“ I assure you, upon my soul, says 'e, “ I ain't a-goin' to start hany new games only get me something to heat in another room, and I'll be as docile as a domesticated crocodile.”

“ Vell sir,” says hi, if master likes to let you hout, 'e may ; but may I be strangled with a napkin afore I hunlocks that ere door vithout 'is leave.”

“ Well,” said Mesmer with some impatience, and did you let him out ?”

“ Tell you di-rectly sir.”

“ Go,” says 'e, “ go and hask your master to come 'ere.”

“ Werry well,” says I, so I vent and fetched master ; then the lunatic, sir, stuffs him up with periodical fits, and I don't know what hall, and master hunlocks the door and lets 'im out.

“ Vell, sir, hout 'e comes dressed all reglar, except his veskit, wot was put on hupside

down, and a grey worsted stocking which was put on by way of a neck-cloth, all vich, his coat bein' buttoned hup to his chin, didn't becum visible until arterwards."

"Sad thing these here fits," says 'e to master as cool as a pickled cucumber, "I dare say you think as I'm mad?"

"Why, *reely*," says master, "I don't wish to hoffend you, but you knocked the chairs about in a manner no indiwidigull in 'is respectable senses would have dreamed of."

"They shall all be paid for," says the lunatic, "there's my card, Guy Merlmore!" and he looked, sir, as hif 'e expected we wos to tumble down on our knees with weneration at the name.

"Merlmore!" said Biron in astonishment.

"Yes, sir, that was the name, and there's the card down stairs a-sticking in the frame of the looking-glass—p'raps, sir, you know some of his friends?"

“ I do,” said Biron, “ how strange !— but proceed—”

“ Vell, sir,” continued the waiter.

“ But it is *not* well,” said Mesmer, vexed at the fellow’s prolixity, “ go on.”

“ Vell, sir,” resumed the imperturbable *garçon*, “ he, that is, sir, the lunatic looks at master with a most melloncly expression, and says, ‘ it’s werry sad these attacks of hintermittent delirium, aint they ?’ ” and at last he gammons him into the belief that he was no more mad than me, sir ! Then sir, he orders a dinner, like hany rational Christian, and sits quite quiet till it was ready, as cunning as a fox, making believe that he was reading the paper.

“ Vell, sir, I only left the room for two minutes, while he was dining, and when I come back, there was the roast beef and the vegetables in the coal-scuttle, and the madman sitting with his feet in the soup tureen, call-

ing out for boiled Champagne and pickled cocoa nuts. Hi rushes out, frightened out of my wits ; he rushes after me into the room opposite, which luckily happened to be empty, when he stumbles hover a hottoman and falls down on his nose ; I bolts hout, and bolts him hin, by turning the key in the door, and there he is at this werry present blessed moment !”

By the time the waiter concluded this narrative, he was quite in a perspiration of excitement.

“ Has he made any attempts to break open the door ?” said Biron.

“ At first he did, sir ; but arterwards he took to singing comic songs and dancing the hornpipe, or the polka, or something of the kind. It’s a good lock and a strong door, so that I fancy he is all right for to-night, and to-morrow master is going to advertise him.”

“ Waiter !” said a voice, whose tones struck

terror to the heart of that hapless personage, who involuntarily sought refuge behind our hero.

The door opened and a man entered—it was the madman.

CHAPTER XVI.

A LUCID INTERVAL.

WITH the exception of the trifling eccentricities already alluded to by the waiter, there was nothing particularly divergent from the vulgar road, (out of the common way, in the vernacular) in the appearance of Mr. Guy Merlmore, whose identity with his recent companion's brother, Mesmer did not for an instant doubt, firstly because the name of Merlmore was by no means a common one ; secondly,

because there was a still stronger family likeness between them, than even that between *la bellissima* Augusta and Mr. Merlmore, which he had so readily detected ; thirdly and lastly because the latter *had* a mad brother, and Mr. Guy Merlmore was certainly not entitled justly to lay claim to a “*mens sana in corpore sano*.”

“ Waiter !” said the lunatic, “ let me have some supper ; I am famished with hunger !”

“ Yes, sir,” said the waiter trembling in every limb, “ what would you please to have, sir ?”

“ Some supper !” thundered the maniac, his eyes beginning to roll wildly in his head to the great horror of the attendant spirit.

“ May I have the pleasure of joining you,” said Biron politely “ I dined with your brother this evening.”

“ You dined with my brother ?” said the

madman, "and pray how is he, and how is his charming daughter, my niece Augusta?"

"Both well," replied Biron.

"Is she not beautiful?" said the madman vehemently.

Without an equal!" replied Biron, and truth gave additional force to his expression.

"Ah!" groaned his companion, "she was to have all—all—every farthing!"

"Indeed?" said Biron in a most sympathising tone, evincing the deep *interest* he felt in all that related to Miss Merlmore and her pecuniary affairs.

"But he is a damned rascal!" exclaimed Guy in a tone of wild ferocity, "I wish I had him by the throat—only for one moment!"

"Had who?" said Biron, not, however, doubting for a moment but that he alluded to his brother.

"Who?" cried the madman, "*who!*—*why*

Cashall, of course, the villain ! who else but he should I like to murder—ha ! ha ! ha !” and he gave vent to a peal of unearthly laughter.

“ He certainly *is* a great villain,” said Mesmer, surprised at this novel coincidence.

“ A lying swindler !” thundered the lunatic.

“ He ought to be hanged !” said Biron humouring him, and desirous of ascertaining, if possible, the secret of his hatred for *Cashall*, and thus, probably, the key to his insanity.

“ I tell you,” said the madman with solemn earnestness, speaking slowly and distinctly, as if to impress the truth of his statement upon his auditor—“ I tell you there never was a deed of partnership—it is a base forgery—and I am ruined !—*worse*—my name and honor are disgraced for ever !”

The lunatic buried his face in his hands, and

gave way to a passionate flood of tears—even Mesmer was moved at the sight.

At this crisis the waiter re-entered the room with cautious steps like the assassin in a popular melo-drama, bearing in his hands a dish of rump-steaks with oyster sauce, and other *agremens*, calculated to disturb the process of human digestion, and produce that fantastic visitation usually termed nightmare, the delights whereof none but those who have experienced them can duly appreciate.

But Guy Merlmore, who, like Hamlet, had some method in his madness, seemed at any rate resolved to escape this additional affliction, for fixing his eyes sternly on the dish above described, he pushed it from him with a shuddering expression of disgust, much to the astonishment of his companion.

“Poison ! rank poison !” exclaimed the madman ; and rising from the table, he suddenly, without another word, quitted the room, walked

up stairs, and entering his own bed room, locked and bolted himself in, and in all probability fell fast asleep within a very short period of time, at any rate he remained perfectly quiet for the remainder of the night.

“ So, so,” quoth Mesmer, “ *chacun a son gout !*” and he having, as the reader is already aware, an excellent general appetite, attacked the supper before him.

The last words he uttered before falling asleep were—

“ Thank God, I have done a good day’s work !” and the beautiful Augusta bade him welcome to the land of rosy dreams, where alone true happiness abides.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WAGER.

“ You alluded yesterday evening,” said Biron as he sat at breakfast on the following morning with Mr. Merlmore, “ to a brother of yours, who went mad, I think you said ?”

“ I did,” said Merlmore.

“ His name is — ?”

“ Guy—Guy Merlmore ; he is the younger of the two.”

“ Exactly—perhaps you are not aware that

Mr. Guy Merlmore is staying at Pink's hotel, where I, also, locate at present."

"Certainly not; I thought he was safe where I left him, at my place in the country; but I suppose he has escaped."

"I suppose he has, for it was only yesterday morning that he threw a variety of furniture down stairs, broke open a door, and in the evening put the roast beef in the coal-scuttle, and washed his feet in a soup-tureen—not to mention wearing his waistcoat reversed, and converting his stockings into cravats, with other little pieces of humour not in vogue with the *profanum vulgus*."

"Indeed; he must be looked after."

"May I venture to enquire the presumed cause of his disease?"

"Certainly; you have heard, no doubt, of the failure of Cashall and Co., the great merchants?"

"I think I have."

"Well, it appears that my brother, shortly previous to that circumstance taking place,

became a sleeping partner in the concern. On the news of their failure being brought to him, he did not seem much affected, but no sooner were they declared bankrupts, and my brother's name joined in the *fiat*, than he flew into a fit of the most passionate violence, swore that he was no partner ; that Cashall was a diabolical scoundrel ; in a short time he became quite incoherent, and finally went raving mad. Hitherto we have not been able to get any information from poor Guy, as, although he has frequent lucid intervals, the least allusion to Cashall brings on such a paroxysm of fury that we have been compelled altogether to avoid the subject. He is, of course, completely ruined, as all his property goes to the creditors, who will by this means be paid in full, whereas, otherwise there would not have been ten shillings* in the pound for them."

* Which I am told, by those learned in commercial matters, has become a very rare occurrence since the passing of the "swindling-made-easy," acts, relative to insolvent debtors.

“ And do you believe that your brother was really a partner ?”

“ How can I doubt it ?—there is the deed of partnership, drawn up by Mr. Monville, and regularly signed and attested.”

“ Do you believe it genuine ?”

“ No doubt of it ; my brother’s signature is not to be mistaken.”

“ Forgery is brought to a high pitch of perfection in these times.”

“ But here it is out of the question.”

“ What sort of a character does Mr. Cashall bear ?”

“ He *did* bear a very high one for commercial probity, nor does anything in the slightest degree fraudulent appear from his examination. He seems to have been very unfortunate.”

“ And Mr. Monville ?”

“ Unimpeachable.”

“ I happen to know that they are a pair of consummate rascals.”

"How so?" inquired Merlmore eagerly.

"Excuse me, my dear sir, that must remain a secret for the present, but I am convinced that there has been some dirty dealing in this matter."

"In what way do you mean?"

"With regard to the deed of partnership."

Here Mesmer retailed to Merlmore the assertions of his brother on the previous night.

"But consider," said Merlmore, "the deranged state of his faculties."

"The very reason I am persuaded he speaks the truth."

"Want of true logic again."

"Logic or no logic, I am persuaded that there never was a deed of partnership."

"Prove it."

"I will bet you a hundred pounds that I do so, if you leave the sifting of the affair in my hands."

“Agreed.”

“Of course you will render me any assistance or information in your power?”

“I shall be but too happy to be a loser.”

“Then I commence my investigation this very day.”

“My dear Count, I feel deeply, most deeply indebted to you.”

“Not a word, gratitude is unphilosophical ; I wish to win my bet ; nothing more.”

“Ah ! true philanthropists always strive to disavow their motives.”

Mesmer blushed—from indignation at Merlmore’s injustice.

But we cannot afford space to continue this conversation farther ; suffice it to say, that before they parted, our ingenious adventurer had persuaded the frank, open-hearted Merlmore that he was one of the most agreeable, amiable, clever, candid, honorable enthusiastic, and last, not least, wealthy young gentleman he had ever encountered. Moreover, Merl-

more had heard and believed all the particulars of the Biron family history, already imparted to Colonel Rossville, thrown out as they were, in hints, anecdotes, and inuendos, with Mesmer's usual *inadvertence*, and had made up his mind that the lovely Augusta and her thirty thousand pounds could not be better bestowed than upon the most noble Count to whom his soul was as effectually secured as if the blood-signed parchment were positively in possession of that designing grandson of Lucifer—the spiritual merchant of Pandemonium.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

IS VULGAR ENOUGH TO INDULGE IN PUNS.

THE second quadrille had just come to a conclusion as the name of Count Mesmer de Biron was announced, or rather mis-announced, by a powdered footman ; and that exemplary individual entered the crowded saloon of Colonel Rossmill, who greeted him with the most friendly cordiality. It may be as well to state that the purchase of the house had been concluded in the interim to the great satisfaction

of all parties, more especially as the Count had obligingly declared his willingness to take fixtures, carpets, and other trifles adapted to the size and shape of the tenement, at a fair valuation, which of course was a great mutual advantage and convenience.

“ Delighted to see you, Count de Biron—are you fond of dancing—introduce you to a partner in a moment—only tell me which is to be the happy fair ?” said Colonel Rossmill.

“ I am much obliged to you, not just now ; I will look about me a little first,” replied Mesmer, whose roving eye glanced like a meteor round the room in search of that lustrous countenance which alone had power to charm his vagrant fancy.

“ Ha, ha ! not a bad plan, reminds me of a party I was once at in the country—sat next a retired grocer at supper—‘ Can I assist you to anything ?’ said I, being nearer to the cold chickens than he was. ‘ No, thankee,’ said he, ‘ I must *take a stock first* !’”

“Wise in the wisdom of the *east*,” rejoined Biron with a smile of aristocratic consciousness as he commenced his tour through the crowd in search of the angelic Augusta.

We have, we believe, already stated that our hero, in his youth, had been a most inveterate novel reader; we remind the gentle reader of this fact, lest he should be surprised at the ease with which the astute Mesmer adapted himself to the manners of a society to which he was of course totally unaccustomed. It must also be remembered that any feeling approaching bashfulness or modesty was entirely a stranger to his disposition, so that he was in no danger of exhibiting *mauvaise honte* which, after all, is, more than anything else, symptomatic of the exelemental *parvenu*.

Not that the superb Mesmer by any means regarded himself in that humble light. Far from it, he gloried in the heroic blood that filled his veins, and as for the bar sinister, he was often wont to repeat for his own conso-

lation, that a few humdrum prayers mumbled by a man in a surplice, made no *very* material difference in the physical results of a philoprogenitive encounter.

Lights were blazing, dresses rustling, dandies bowing, angels smiling, all was noise and splendour and confusion, as the illustrious hero of these handsomely printed pages made his way across the crowded ball-room to the spot where he had at length descried the lovely object of his search, surrounded by admiring dandies applauding her *bon mots* to the echo, and striving with praiseworthy emulation to outdo one another in the liveliness of their repartees.

But here we must rein in our high spirited Pegasus, whose 'dash along' style has been so severely reprehended by the critic, and give the reader a slight sketch of the fair Augusta Merlmore's personal appearance and character.

This fascinating young lady, then, was about

eighteen years of age ; the expression of her features, which were slightly, very slightly aquiline, was indicative of the most exquisite sensibility. She was, indeed, a girl of the most susceptible feelings, and whether influenced by a sublime, pathetic, or humorous idea, her face was ever the faithful index of her mind. Uniting to a complexion delicately fair, hair and eyes dark as the tails of the ermine, she possessed a bust and figure whose graceful formation required no tight laced stays to force them into shape. Her feet were worthy of a naiad, and her ankles—but themes so lofty are beyond our art. She was, to take her all in all, a most seductive girl, as all who once had seen her boldly vowed.

Moreover she was a wit ; but her facetiousness was rather the result of girlish playfulness and exuberant spirits, than a desire to excite admiration. It was not however upon all occasions that she indulged her frolic vein, and when at all embarrassed as *par exemple*

during her first interview with Mesmer, suffered it to be entirely dormant.

“ Ah! how do you do, Count de Biron?” she exclaimed, as our hero approached her. “ My father has been telling me and uncle so much about you that I quite longed to see you again.”

“ Then your father has made me eternally his debtor,” said Mesmer bowing, with a significant smile.

“ Indeed,” rejoined the young lady, laughing, “ I have heard of many people being in danger of remaining eternally his *creditors*, but your’s is quite a new feature in my experience.”

“ I hope it may not prove a disagreeable one,” replied Biron.

“ Oh! novelty is always charming, you know,” said Miss Merlmore, “ by the bye, how much *we* are indebted to you for your kind attention to my poor uncle — do you think there is any hope of his recovery.”

“ I am not a physician—but I think it not impossible that when the cause is removed, the effect may also disappear.”

“ I am delighted to hear you say so ; as for your not being a physician, the days are gone by when a diploma was thought useful in the cure of diseases—cold water, galvanic rings, and above all, mesmerism have turned up, and by so doing turned over a new leaf in medical science, and overturned the old system completely.”

“ Have you faith in any universal specific?”

“ No, I regard them all as popular delusions, like the *elixir vitæ* or the philosopher’s stone, which by the way was a *pudding stone*, a fact, I believe, not generally known.”

“ Because it was full of *plums* I presume, said Mesmer laughing, just sufficiently at the young lady’s pun, to shew he appreciated it.”

“ As for the cold-water system, if you wish

to go to a quiet place to diet yourself it is all very well."

"All very well to die at—ha, ha, ha!—really Miss Merlmore, you should have a Boswell always at your elbow to take down your good things."

"I must get some one to take them up for me—and get them published I think, but what could I call the book when it was filled."

"The angel's jest-book, you could not have a better title."

"Well, I must consider the matter—but I perceive that we are destined to waltz."

"May I have the pleasure of being your partner?"

"You may," replied Augusta.

The music commenced—the dancers whirled in rapid circles round the room. Mesmer waltzed badly—no wonder, a couple of private lessons taken in the morning and afternoon

the day before, could not effect much, even with *him*—still he *had* caught the step and natural grace and agility did a great deal, besides so few Englishmen can waltz—then he was so good looking and so entertaining.

No, Augusta Merlmore did *not* desire a more accomplished dancer in his place. And when they paused, how absorbingly interesting was his discourse; even when speaking of the most trivial subjects, how radiant with pleasure was her countenance.

Did this pass unnoticed?—are men human?—women females?—No, there was whispering and wondering, and questioning, and oh!-ing, and indeed?-ing, and quizzing through glasses—heiresses are people of importance in the world—especially to younger brothers, and elder ones with small fortunes, or fortunes yet to be inherited, or no fortunes at all, either in present possession, or future expectancy; they are also important to mammas with

unmarried, portionless daughters, in whose sunshine, like Alexander versus Diogenes *Tubbiensis*, they are apt to stand.

“ Who was that dancing with her ?”

“ Count de Biron.”

“ Who *was* Count de Biron ?”

“ Who *was* he ?”

“ Ah, who ?”

“ A young man of distinguished talent and family,” replied Mr. Merlmore, to whom this question was propounded by the Dowager Lady Quibbleton.

“ Fortune ?” persevered the dowager.

“ Very considerable—three thousand a-year, I believe,” replied the gullable papa.

“ Ah, ah !—a very nice looking person,”—and within five minutes time her ladyship had vacated her *bergere* and was whispering to a young lady *un peu passée* at the other extremity of the room---“ look, my dear, that is Count de Biron---there, that handsome young

man dancing with Miss Merlmore, he has three thousand a-year——”

“ Indeed --- she seems quite fascinated --- the bold faced creature. Sir John Wagtail was coming towards me just previous to the last quadrille---I am sure he was going to engage me, when she gave him one of her looks—you know her way of looking mamma ?”——

“ Yes, my dear, I know,” replied the dowager with a nod of vast significance and sapiency.”

“ And he asked *her*, of course—he could not very well help himself.”

“ No, he could not, or else I am sure he would much rather have danced with me.”

“ I have no doubt of it, my dear---and another nod of maternal sympathy and acquiescence.”

“ Miss Quibbleton is talking of us, I am sure, by her spiteful look,” said Augusta

to the count, "she is a very disagreeable thin-looking creature ; they say her face is like Napoleon's."

"She certainly will make a bony *partie*, when she gets married, if that event should ever come to pass," rejoined Biron.

"I cannot bear any one to fix their eyes upon me for a long time together, it makes me quite nervous, Sampson himself would have been puzzled how to escape from such a Gaza."

"I must confess," said Biron, "that the lady you allude to, and the specimen of antiquity by her side, have honored us with *stares* enough to build a ladder to Mahommed's seventh heaven!"

"Why really, count, you are as inveterate a punster as myself---you can hit hard, I perceive."

"On the contrary, I flatter myself that I *strike light*---when I strike at-all.

“ In that case you had better make a *match* at once,” retorted the lovely punster with an arch smile.

“ In joco, sæpe veritas,”

as Lucullus hath it.

CHAPTER XIX.

PRINCE AURELIUS.

THE entrance of his royal highness Prince Aurelius von Rosenberg at this crisis, produced a great sensation, and he was received with still greater *empressment* than our hero by Colonel Rossmill, who although himself descended from a younger branch of one of the most noble English families, and possessor of a considerable estate, like

most Englishmen, entertained nevertheless a somewhat gigantic veneration for rank--- In his eye a count was silver---but a prince was virgin gold.

Aurelius von Rosenberg was at that time the idol of fashionable society, about thirty years of age, polished in his manners, without a shadow of affectation, eminently handsome, and gifted with a most commanding intellect, his company was everywhere sought for, and his conquests amongst the fairer sex were so numerous, that had he kept a diary they would have formed by no means the rarest items in its weekly contents.

He was moreover the head of a house whose pedigree was lost in the darkness of the earliest centuries of christianity, and although diplomatic roguery had deprived him of a place amongst the reigning sovereigns of Europe, he still retained estates which produced him an income of some seventy thousand

dollars* per annum ; enough, even in this land of 'purse-proud shopkeepers,' to redeem him from the appellation of 'beggarly foreigner,' so often applied by the vulgar to German princes not invested with rent-rolls proportionate to those of our own wealthy aristocracy.

It was whispered --- with what truth we know not---that the option of sharing the most powerful throne in the world had once been pretty loudly hinted to him by the minister, and that his highness had declined the questionable honor, from love of liberty and retirement --- in other words, had refused to sell himself for an empty title, or to wed a woman whose obedience he could not enforce, and whose personal charms he could not admire.

But whatever admiration or still tenderer

* Above 10,000 pounds of our money.

sentiments he excited, the apparently cold and unimpassioned Aurelius remained himself untouched by the countless arrows of Eros darted at his heart from so many bright and beautiful eyes. Ever amiable and kind, but ever indifferent, he pursued his erratic course, through the world like a wandering comet, careless, perhaps unconscious, of the wonder and admiration he so universally attracted.

Devoted to science and philosophy, he passed his time in occupations and studies, as diametrically opposed to the usual pursuits of other young men of rank and fortune, as dawn to midnight darkness, and valued the opinion of the world as lightly as the yellow dust he *did not* squander, simply because he saw no pleasure in extravagance.

His vanity was moderate, though the flattery he every where encountered, the books dedicated to him, the verses sent to him from fairest hands might well have turned the head of an ordinary mortal. But Aurelius von Ro-

senberg was not to be classed in that obscure category.

Colonel Rossmill had originally become acquainted with him at Dresden, and similarity of pursuits soon ripened their acquaintance into intimacy.

The Prince was a great phrenologist, and a still greater mesmerist. Indeed, his devotion to animal magnetism was so great that he generally had one or more desperate cases upon his hands. Hitherto his philanthropic efforts had been attended with unparalleled—almost miraculous success, and although the incredulous sneeringly remarked that he undertook the cure of none, but young ladies distinguished for their beauty, and more than hinted that the said young ladies were not averse to securing a familiar intercourse with so handsome a prince, the fact was that he really succeeded in many instances, where the most eminent of the faculty had given up all hope of ultimate recovery.

As is to be supposed, the Prince was a frequent and a welcome visiter at the house of Colonel Rossmill, whose niece, Augusta, alone ventured to doubt the infallibility of the illustrious mesmeriser. She did not fall in love with him like the rest, probably on account of the familiarity of their intercourse almost from her childhood, and hesitated not to take the opposite side of a question to that which he adopted, indeed on one occasion she actually went the length of telling him in jest that ‘that eternal mesmerism’ was rather a bore.”

“You do not understand it,” replied Aurelius coldly, with a chilling look that almost froze the blood in her veins.

Nevertheless, she, in reality, enthusiastically admired the generous character of Rosenberg, and if she did not flatter him like many of his friends, she perhaps more truly appreciated his real virtues ; but as I have already observed, she did not love him, for she felt

that he was beyond her sphere, and also in fact, not a marrying man. Indeed, he was wont to quote the well-known saying of Fox with a gusto which proved his subscription to its truth that "a man was never thoroughly undone till he was married."

If anybody insinuated the necessity of an heir to the house of Rosenberg, which would otherwise terminate with his life, he coolly replied that everything must have an end some day, and that whether that day was to-morrow or the day after, or a thousand years hence, was a matter of very little importance.

CHAPTER XX.

THE INTRODUCTION.

“ALLOW me to introduce to your highness, Count de Biron ;” said Augusta.

Aurelius bowed with great affability.

“How are all your patients, Prince ?”

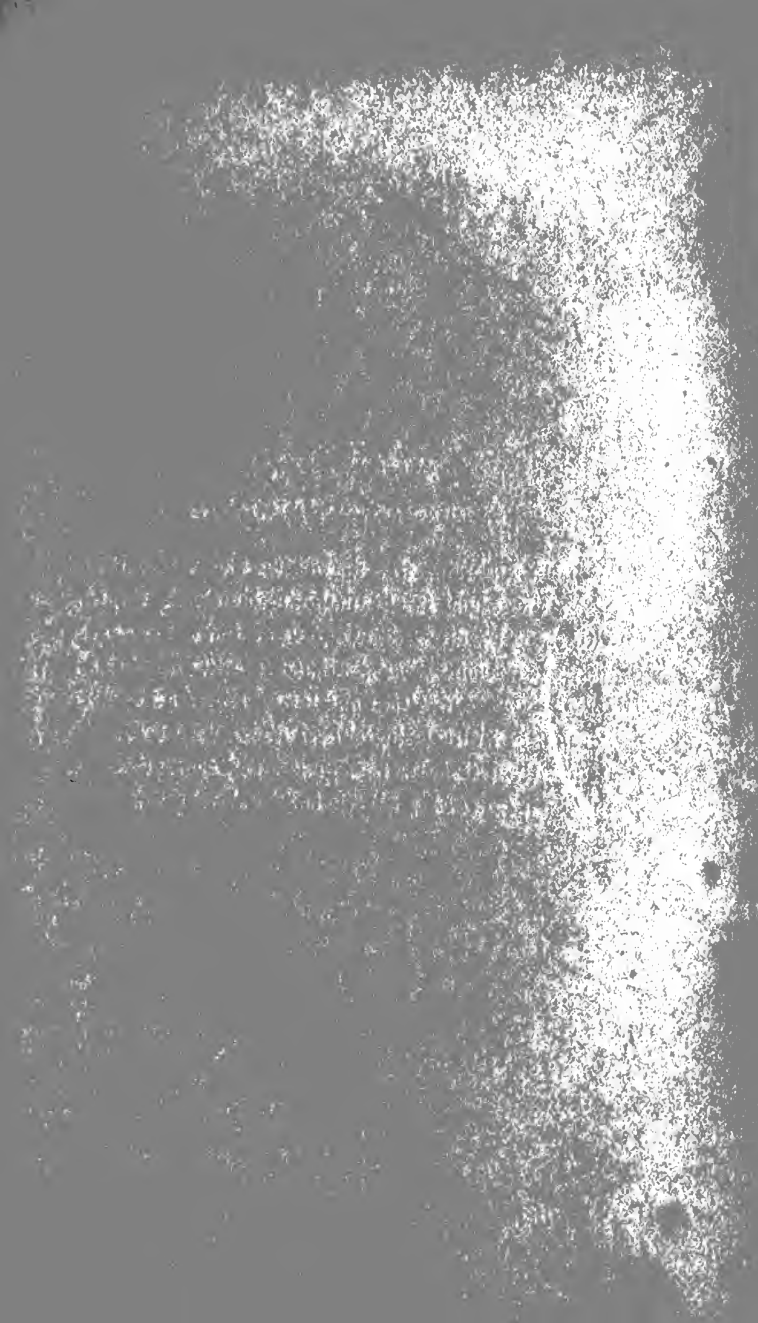
“Better,” said Aurelius laconically, for on account of the illnatured reports circulated, he was remarkably sensitive on that subject even to jest.

“I have seen a most extraordinary case

case of phreno-magnetism lately, do you know, at Mrs.—I really forget the name—but it was positively the most diverting thing in the world ; would you believe it, on touching the organs of *wit* and *order* at the same time, the girl started up and declared she would go to the theatre without paying the entrance ; and on touching—exciting I mean—*form* and *destructiveness*, she kicked down two benches that were in the room with the greatest violence and fury !”

“Jesting aside,” said Biron, who wished to pay his court to the Prince, and perceived that although he affected to smile, he loved not to hear his hobby jested on, “jesting aside, I am convinced that if any doubt yet be maintained by the enlightened portion of the community as to the truths of phrenology, its union with magnetism would at once set the question at rest.”

“One would suppose so,” rejoined the Prince “but such is the aversion of mankind



AURELIUS.

PHRENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

A large brain, fine nervobilious active temperament, the whole intellectual lobe largely developed, with great Ideality. The organs of the moral sentiments Benevolence, Conscientiousness and Firmness, all very large. Self-esteem and love of approbation fully developed, with considerable caution. Very moderate Acquisitiveness. Destructiveness and combativeness full. Organs of the affections fully developed.



AURELIUS.



to the admission of new truths that I have actually known men say that even if they *saw*, they would not believe."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Biron, such men must have been deists or downright atheists; for if they would not believe a fact upon the evidence of their senses, how could they believe the truths of religion upon the evidence of tradition and history?"

"How, indeed?" replied the Prince ironically, "nevertheless, these people were very excellent christians, I can assure you, and would have damned not only every infidel, but every dissenter, from what they considered the orthodox church with as little compunction as you or I might tread upon a wasp or a lizard."

"Sublime consistency of unenquiring folly!" exclaimed Mesmer with a philosophic air of pity, and disgust, as if he really cared a far-

thing about truth, religion or magnetism either one way or the other."

"Nay," continued Aurelius, "they carry their absurd opposition to fact still further, for finding that certain things are effected which it is impossible to altogether deny, they ascribe them to Satanic agency, and account for them by the direct interposition of the devil!"

"How insanely ridiculous!"

"You may well say so."

"But surely this childish doctrine cannot have found many adherents?"

"You are not, then, aware that a *book* has actually been written by a learned and enlightened Clergyman* to disprove these insanities as maintained in the writings of a bigoted divine, who enjoys unfortunately a very extensive popularity."

* The Rev. Mr. Sandby. "Mesmerism and its opponents."

“Is it possible?”

“A well known fact.”

“I must confess,” said Biron, “that my knowledge of this interesting—*most* interesting science has been chiefly derived from books, and that, excepting at a public lecture, I have never yet had an opportunity of witnessing any decided case of *clairvoyance*, though I have often longed to see one.”

“Then,” said Aurelius, “I am happy that it will be in my power to gratify your wish. So if nothing better engages your attention I shall expect to see you at noon to-morrow in my library. My house is number —, Park-Lane.”

The Count de Biron expressed the pleasure he felt in accepting this invitation, and the Prince Von Rosenberg was soon occupied in conversation with a grey headed physician, and a white headed member of parliament—

the former, a venerable sexagenarian — the latter, a youth who had just turned an ominous corner in the road of life (and military promotion) by attaining his majority.

“ Well,” said Augusta “ what do you think of the Prince ?”

“ He appears to me an amiable, as well as an interesting character.”

“ Do you think he is handsome ?”

“ Very,” replied Biron, whose conviction of his own irresistibility was much too strong to admit of the meanness of detracting from the merits of even a rival’s exterior.

“ He certainly has very fine eyes,” said Augusta.

Mesmer felt somewhat vexed at this remark ; it was going too far ; he was astonished that one upon whom *his* eye rested could think of anybody else’s, but as we have already

stated, Miss Merlmore was *not* in love with Aurelius, so he might have spared himself the light shade of jealousy which now fell for an instant across the triumph of his daring soul.

We say, or rather write, for an instant—and another moment our hero's proud self-confidence returned, and he bent every nerve towards the one grand object of fascinating the lovely niece of Colonel Rossmill. And did she smile as his lips poured forth the sportive pun or careless satire? did her bosom heave and her soft, melting eyes become yet softer and more melting as he struck the chords of sentiment or bathos?

They did—the spell began to work—the vision of Aurelius, if it had ever dwelt within her heart, now faded into dimness, and Biron's name was graven in its place.

That night—morning I mean—Augusta

dreamed—now do not, my *dear* reader be disappointed ; it was nothing sentimental—she dreamed that she was coming from a ball and that “ the Countess de Biron’s carriage stopped the way !”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CLAIRVOYANT.

ON arriving at the house of his royal highness Prince Aurelius Von Rosenberg, in what the fashionable novelists would term the aristocratic regions of Park-lane, our gallant Count was ushered into a library, the magnificence of which at first sight would have dazzled the unaccustomed eye of any one less self-possessed than the adventurous individual of whom this history treats. But Mesmer, as hath been

stated more than once in these eventful pages, was deeply read in the lore of modern novelism.

Pelham, Vivian Grey, and their more humble, or rather more impudent imitation, by Mrs. Gore, Cecil, were books which he had conned to some advantage ; for although the insane affectation of these renowned heros and their authors may seem impracticable to the minds of the unsophisticated—that is, supposing any such people to exist—many useful hints for the inexperienced in the tortuous maze of society may be gathered from their leaves ; and indeed the lofty principle of making oneself disagreeable to ninety-nine people, for the sake of pleasing the hundredth is still much in vogue with the vulgars, commonly called fashionables, for the terms are in reality nearly synonymous, both signifying common-place, uninteresting, every day people.

Biron therefore was by no means surprised

at the luxurious arrangements of Prince Aurelius's library, which he nevertheless carefully regarded, with the view of adopting in his new mansion a few of its tasteful and elegant comforts, which we will here briefly describe for the benefit of those of our readers who are amateurs in the art of furnishing, a science wherein we flatter ourselves upon having attained some slight proficiency.

To commence:—the room was spacious in its dimensions, lofty as to altitude, and square as to form. The *pavé* consisted of the softest carpets, overlaid by open-work mats of the most exquisite Chinese workmanship; around the room stood alternate couches and divans of crimson velvet and rosewood, in front of which were placed tables light and easily moveable, yet firm and strong, again alternately furnished with reading-stands and writing-materials. Two of the sofas were provided with an apparatus for sustaining a book above the heads of those who wished to read in a

reclining attitude, or to administer literary morphine to their brains. Instead of the usual inconvenient receptacles for those 'silent friends' too often raised above all human reach except by the cumbrous application of ladders, a circular book-case, with only four rows of shelves, occupied the centre of the room, this ingenious *meuble* was made to turn with great ease upon a pivot in the centre, so that any one, without moving from their seat, might run their eye over above two thousand tomes in a few minutes; this almost entirely obviated all trouble in hunting for stray volumes, so annoying to the student of impatient or sanguine temperament.

Above this circular bibloscope, if we may venture to invent a word for our invention, hung a lamp, with a large shade, so contrived as to throw a light upon the backs of the volumes in the hours of darkness. Sundry easy chairs of strange and varied shape stood round the book-case, amongst which, rocking

chairs of American 'raising' were not forgotten.

The walls were adorned with landscapes of such exquisite coloring and perspective, that, framed as they were, they conveyed the idea of open gothic windows to the beholder, between which, on brackets of carved oak stood marble busts of the illustrious dead, complacently surveying the classic retreat they inhabited.

Upon the various tables were scattered papers and pamphlets in indiscriminate confusion, interspersed with curious instruments, the use whereof it was impossible for the uninitiated to conjecture; snuff-boxes, three cornered notes of amorous contour, daggers, seals, medallions, skulls, casts, portraits in red-morocco cases, locks of hair, and *je ne sais quoi* besides, forming together a most remarkable *olla podrida*, as well worth examination as the curiosities at the British Museum — that mysterious edifice, never by any chance

accessible at the day or hour one takes it into ones head in a fit of antiquarianism to visit it. Not, my dear fellow, that I would have you fancy us one of the book-devouring extractors so facetiously described by Sketch-book Irving. No, no, we love our *otium cum* (at we fancy not altogether *sine*) *dignitate* too well to attempt frequent pilgrimages to the remote regions of Great Russell Street, and after all, if Scriptor will not go to the ideas, ideas must come to Scriptor, and, like Virginius, “we are patient—quite patient!”

On the entrance of our adventurer, a dead silence reigned in the apartment, and the servant who introduced him pointed, without speaking, to an arm chair of inviting aspect, then retreated on tiptoe and closed the door behind him with noiseless dexterity. In two other chairs were seated his friend Merlmore and another gentleman, whom he had never before seen, with sandy hair and a blue satin stock with a very large tie, one corner of

which he was munching with very commendable perseverance.

On the sofa at the end of the room lay a pale, interesting looking girl, and by her side sat the Prince von Rosenberg, his left hand resting upon her head, whilst with the right he occasionally made downward passes over her face and bust. On the entrance of Biron he turned his head for an instant and nodded a welcome, then resumed his former attitude.

There have recently been a great many attempts made to place animal magnetism in a ridiculous light. We say *attempts*—for they were very poor ones, and have mostly served to shew the ignorance and stupidity of the persons satirising; but we are persuaded that any one who has witnessed genuine experiments in this science *must* have been impressed with a certain degree of awe and admiration, however much their success might run counter to his preconceived prejudices.

There was something sublime in the calm,

confident expression of power legible in the features of Aurelius, and the beautiful, death-like tranquillity of the young girl's countenance. The half drawn crimson curtains threw a red, mysterious gloom over the group, and riveted, to their movements, the gaze of the spectators, expressive of the intensest interest.

At length the patient gave a slight, convulsive start, and Aurelius rising, shook hands with his visitors, and informed them that she was asleep.

They approached the sofa. So pale, so marble-like she looked, that it was difficult to refrain from the belief that the form before them was a corpse laid out for burial.

For my part, I cannot imagine how any one who has seen a person mesmerised can even suppose the possibility of the sleep being feigned — at any rate, so skilfully as to deceive men of talent, science, and observation!

“In a few minutes,” said Aurelius, “she will wake—that is, to a second state—Louisa! Louisa!” he repeated, and the girl sat up on the couch, her eyes fixed in a peculiar manner, which, if possible to be imitated, could certainly never be sustained for any length of time in the common waking state.

In a few minutes she arose and walked about the room like a somnambulist, apparently unconscious of the presence of any one, and went through a series of attitudes, alternately, expressive of the most touching sadness, the most enthusiastic devotion, fear, horror, delight—in all, the attitude and expression of her countenance were faultless. The utter absence of all consciousness of being watched gave an artless grace and simplicity, a sublime truthfulness to her actions, which would have made the fortunes of fifty actresses, could they have produced but a humble imitation of their extraordinary facility, and as studies to an artist they would have been invaluable.

“ This,” said Aurelius, “ is her dream — we must let it take its course; it generally lasts for about half an hour, she then becomes *clairvoyant*, and is, I believe, one of the best cases that have ever been known. She formerly suffered from diseases of the most dangerous and complicated kind, and is now almost completely cured.”

“ How long has she been under your care ?” said Mesmer.

“ About three months, she was given up as incurable by Dr. ———”

The patient after a time returned to the couch, and again fell into the deep sleep.

In about three minutes the prince roused her a second time, she sat up with closed eyes, and was watched by Mesmer, Merlmore, and Lord Friskerton, under which title, we neglected to state, the gentleman in the blue satin stock had been introduced to our hero, with most careful scrutiny.

Lord Friskerton, by the way, was a very

young man of considerably larger fortune than wit, but vastly good tempered and amiable withal, and gifted with a certain degree of vulgar inquisitiveness, which led him to run after, if not to investigate anything that struck him as being out of the common way, or, as he expressed himself “deucedly odd affairs.” For sometime past he had been boring Prince Aurelius to shew him a *clairvoyant*, and Rosenberg had at length consented to gratify his curiosity.

Having taken a sovereign in his hand, the princely mesmeriser now brought it in contact with the patient’s arm, which immediately became rigid or cataleptic, and then by touching it with a piece of iron he reduced it to its former condition.

“These experiments with metals,” said he “are extremely interesting, but somewhat dangerous, particularly if extended to the whole body, I shall therefore confine myself to this simple illustration.”

Aurelius then wrote upon a piece of paper

a few words, and handed it to Biron, who passed it on to Merlmore and Lord Friskerton. They intimated that he was now about to shew some instances of phreno-magnetic developments, which he forthwith did, by pointing with his fingers to the various organs.

The experiment was eminently successful, but as our limits do not permit us to enter into details, we must confine ourselves to the simple statement, that all the corresponding demonstrations were produced by touching the various organs. On exciting *veneration* the girl fell upon her knees and prayed with a fervour that was positively affecting. By transferring his finger to *self-esteem* she was made to rise and draw herself up with a pride and dignity that was equally ludicrous. On touching *attachment* she grasped the hand of Aurelius and poured forth expressions of friendship and regard. *Destructiveness* being excited she tore a pocket-handkerchief to

pieces with every semblance of the most violent rage; and so through all the other faculties.

The prince then begged his visitors to address questions to the somnambulist in any foreign languages they might be master of, assuring them at the same time that she was totally ignorant of every one but her native tongue.

She was accordingly interrogated by Merlmore and Lord Friskerton in Latin, Greek, Italian, and German; and by Mesmer in Spanish and Arabic, of which he had a slight knowledge--with the most astonishing results: the replying to their questions in English without a moment's hesitation or embarrassment.*

* See the supplement to Miss Martineau's "Letters on Mesmerism." "Isis Revelata." Teste's manual," &c., &c., &c.

It may not be superfluous here to observe that this is a most important fact in magnetic science, and one of the strongest arguments against the dull materialism adopted by Dr. E——n and his party. At least, to our mind, nothing can be a stronger proof of the possibility of the soul's existence apart from the body, and, (were any proof thereof necessary,) of the immortality of the soul, than this direct communication of soul with soul. Indeed, we have always seen in the magnetic phenomena, strong evidence of the innate nature of the senses, and of the paramount and absolute ascendancy of spirit over matter.

All the arguments of the aforesaid materialists in their obstinate and unaccountable opposition to the influence of imagination, faith, and will, appear to us trivial and one-sided, and it may be something in favor of our view of the case, that the most eminently successful practical magnetisers coincide with our opinion.

The next wonder of *clair-voyance* displayed by Prince Aurelius's patient, was, if possible, still more extraordinary, for she described to him, at the suggestion of Biron, the room in which Augusta Merlmore was seated, her occupation, and even her attitude—all which were afterwards discovered to have been studiously correct.

The blood boiled in the veins of the fiery Mesmer, and his heart throbbed with increased rapidity during this description; but a new turn was given to his thoughts by the experiment which succeeded.

Carefully placing pieces of wool over the eyes of the patient, Aurelius proceeded to bandage the face of the *clair-voyant* in such a manner, that any idea of seeing in the common way was utterly inconceivable. She then read a sentence written on a card in a snuff-box with closed lid, a paragraph from a newspaper, a portion of a letter Lord Friskerton produced from his pocket, and played

a game at *écarté* with Merlmore, which she won—evidently possessing as great a knowledge of her opponent's cards as of her own.*

During this last experiment the eyes of our most noble count were fixed upon the operator with an air of the deepest interest and scrutiny, and a peculiar smile flashed across his features, as if some brilliant thought had suddenly struck upon his fancy.

After trying some other experiments of a similar kind, the *clair-voyante* was thrown into the deep sleep again for a few minutes, then aroused, upon which the prince conducted

*It may be as well to state that all the experiments described in this chapter, and indeed throughout the work, are well authenticated, and probably no novelties to most of our readers; many of whom have doubtless seen Alexis, or other publicly or privately exhibited cases, or read some of the numberless works on the subject.

his visitors into another room, where an excellent luncheon awaited them.

“After this,” said Lord Friskerton, helping himself to a glass of Rudesheimer, “I shall cease to suspect those public exhibitions, at which, if common rumour is at all to be relied on, pins stuck in the arms of the poor devils exhibited, are paid for at the rate of one shilling per head.”

“More likely per *point*,” said Mesmer.

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Friskerton, “deucedly good—one shilling per *point*, ha, ha, ha! At any rate there is some point in that joke.”

“You will do well, nevertheless,” said Aurelius “not to place too implicit credence in these public performances, as there have been many instances of quackery and charlatanism in mesmeric exhibitions as in everything else. Not that by the grossest trickery they can do anything half so wonderful as that which is really effected by the magnetic influence; indeed I am persuaded that the instances of

imposture have been much fewer than is generally imagined."

"What is the reason I wonder," said Merlmore "of the general aversion to animal magnetism?"

"The open, candid manner in which it courts enquiry, and recommends experiment. Had it been treated as a mystery and palmed off upon the public of the present day as in the old time, under the title of magic, divination, oracles, or what not, they would have believed with still greater facility than that of Hook, when on subscribing to the thirty-nine articles he frankly expressed his readiness to attest his belief in a *fortieth* if required. As an illustration of the superiority in interest of conjuring tricks over the real miracles of natural science might be cited the fact that a showman is actually at the present moment exhibiting a *clair-voyante* with considerable success under the title of "the mysterious lady."

"There can be no doubt, I think," said

Mesmer, "that long before my illustrious namesake started his theory, animal magnetism was both consciously and unconsciously very extensively employed, for instance, by the priest of Isis and Osiris *et hoc genus omne*."

"And no doubt," rejoined Aurelius, "many a devout fanatic has exercised a magnetic influence in the cure of diseases under the impression that all was to be attributed to grace from the powers above. I have myself cured cases of rheumatism and palsy by a single application."

"In what way," said Biron, "should you describe the mode of exerting the magnetic power?"

"It is difficult to define the precise sensation," replied the Prince, "I concentrate my whole mind upon the object to be effected, by throwing, as it were, my soul into my eyes or hands, and willing powerfully the effect I wish to produce. Whether there is a magnetic fluid, and how far magnetism is to be compared to elec-

tricity or galvanism is yet matter of doubt and discussion. To me it appears that the greater the faith and the stronger the exertion of volition, the more powerful the effect upon the patient. Physically speaking, I have heard this concentration of one's faculties compared to raising a heavy weight, nor is the simile an unapt one, but there are things which it is more easy to *feel* than to describe."

"Some have greater magnetic power than others, perhaps?"

"Doubtless—it would in a great measure depend upon the strength of their intellects, the development of their organs of firmness and concentrativeness, as also of their imaginative faculties, without which, the requisite degree of faith is scarcely possible."

"There are few things in which I take a deeper interest than in magnetism," said Mesmer, "and what I have seen to-day has increased my passion for the study."

"Any information I can give you," said

Aurelius, “ is heartily at your service ; I trust you will soon find your way here again, or I shall be much disappointed.”

It is scarcely necessary to say that Biron expressed the greatest pleasure at the prospect of availing himself of this flattering invitation.

A profoundly thoughtful expression pervaded our hero's countenance as he took leave of his agreeable and illustrious entertainer, and the Prince's other two guests. He did not, however, forget to send his kind—no—his *kindest* regards to the fair and intelligent Augusta.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE IDEA.

CHANCE had thrown in the way of our adventurous hero an excellent second-hand cab, little the worse for some six months' wear and tear, which, together with a black mare of somewhat showy exterior, he had bought of a gentleman about to leave England for a colonial appointment at a very great bargain, "the whole lot," as the auctioneers would say, including harness and other appurtenances,

being knocked down to him for the sum of one hundred pounds sterling. He also took the vendor's groom into his service, he being a smart fellow, and receiving an excellent character for quickness and honesty from his late master.

As to the latter point Mesmer was naturally very particular in his enquiries, for it is a fact well known, from the arctic to the antarctic zone, that men ever value *that* most *highly* which they themselves are not possessed of.

The "Biron Arms," with which Mesmer furnished the coachmaker, were painted as elaborately as the hurry would admit of upon the pannels. They consisted of a *lyre argent* and other insignia, the mystery whereof their creator alone comprehended.

The motto was from Euripides, and may be thus translated—

"Simple is the language of truth."

“ *Simple* enough,” thought Biron as he scribbled down this *morceau* of the ancient tragic muse.

With regard to the horse, as may be conjectured, Mesmer was, from his utter ignorance of all matters relating to those useful quadrupeds, quite at the mercy of the man from whom he purchased it, however his lucky stars favoured him in this, as in numerous other instances, and the showy black mare, with her glossy coat and extensive tail, was neither more ancient than stated, vicious of temper, or otherwise defective. She did not *drop her tail*, as hath happened before now to novices in horseflesh, neither did she roar or stumble, or shy, or plunge, or rear, in short, she proved to be a very excellent beast in every respect, and did ample justice to the character given her by her former owner.

Into his well hung cab now Biron sprung, and bade his tiger seat himself within,

and drive him homewards straight without delay.

Not that I would have the reader imagine that Mesmer's inexperience in "coaching" deprived him of the nerve to drive himself. Far from it ; he was born a Jehu, with an intuitive talent for driving both horses and men, nor did his newly engaged "slavey" suspect for an instant that his graceful master had never, until the day he bought the cab and mare of his late "governor," in the whole course of his life taken a pair of reins into his kidded hands.

But in fact our excellent hero's mind was too fully occupied with other matters to allow him to direct his absorbed faculties to the guidance of a black mare with a long tail, through the crowded streets of London.

From the scene he had just witnessed, he had caught an idea which, although yet tossing about in his active and designing brains, in a crude and only partially developed state,

threatened ultimately to eclipse in brilliancy of ingenuity and magnitude of results every deep laid scheme which hitherto either his fertile imagination had suggested or his no less remorseless and energetic will had put into execution.

It *can*—it *shall* be done !” thought he aloud, as he sprang from the cabriolet, at the door of his caravanseraï, and without replying to, or indeed being conscious of his servant’s query as to whether he should require his further attendance, he darted into the house, rushed up stairs, and shutting himself into his room, turned the key in the door and repeated aloud with the same smile of almost fiendlike glee—

“ It *can*—it *shall* be done !”

He then paced up and down the apartment with feverish excitement, revolving in his mind the desperate and unheard of design he had formed, occasionally clapping his hands and biting his lips, whilst the fixed stare of his

eyes evinced how deeply his thoughts and feelings were engaged.

Gradually, however, he regained his wonted tranquillity, and a settled expression of calm determination upon his countenance alone remained of the storm which had so recently possessed his bosom, excited, in all probability, by the contemplation of some sublime piece of villany.

Reaction is ever the follower of nervous excitement; thus strange as it appears, Mesmer having thrown himself upon a couch, sank in a few minutes into a refreshing and peaceful slumber.

Who, in the placid beauty of those fair and delicate features, would have recognised the countenance so recently illumined by the fiercest and most malignant passions? Who would imagine that beneath those long, dark, silken lashes which Queens would have rejoiced to possess, could flash such basiliskine glances as but now were emitted from their

hidden orbs? Who in that smooth, marmoreal brow would suspect the frown of scorn of late displayed? Who dream that those soft lips, so gently parted by the sweet, warm breath, could send forth the blackest and most treacherous lies, the most profound hypocrisy, the wildest blasphemy? Who dream that in those limits, so gracefully relaxed, there lurked a strength even the coarse champion of the ring might envy?

None! Never did the pseudo sacred veil, woven by most cunning priesthood's art, hide so effectually the mystic secrets of their impious jugglery, as did the external form of the self styled Count Mesmer de Biron conceal from the eyes of the world his real nature and disposition.

But, charming reader, let us not—though we must confess that no colouring could render the picture too dark for the truth—let us not altogether disgust you with the character it is our painful duty to commemorate;

bad as he was, Mesmer *had* some redeeming points—at least we *fancy so*—but time must develop them, if they have not hitherto become very conspicuous. And see!—he wakes again --those ominous words—to what can they refer?—

“ It *can*—it *shall* be done !”

CHAPTER XXIII.

HELL.

MESMER thought it advisable to cultivate the acquaintance of the right honourable Earl of Friskerton with considerable assiduity, and with that amiable young nobleman, besides being much impressed by the distinguished air and style of the graceful count, was, moreover, extremely glad to find in him a constant and agreeable companion, to assist him in passing away the leaden hours, and in getting rid of his

twenty thousand per annum, which he had inherited just in time to prevent him from spending it before he came into its possession under the auspices of sundry obliging and accommodating Hebrews.

Before Biron had known Friskerton a fortnight, they were upon terms of the greatest intimacy, indeed the Count became so indispensable to the Peer, that he actually begged him to make Friskerton-house his own, until the mansion he had purchased of Colonel Rossmill could be arranged for his reception. To this request Mesmer at length, with apparent reluctance, consented, although in reality he was delighted at the offer.

It was not long before he obtained a complete ascendancy over his lordly host, an ascendancy the more perfect, that it was based upon respect and esteem—at least on one side. A strong mind must ever obtain this relation with regard to a weak one; but Mesmer used no finesse or toadying arts to ingratiate him-

self with the young peer. He simply *flattered*—not that he overwhelmed the bear he had undertaken to lead, with the wholesale adulation and fulsome laud so frequently bestowed upon similar animals, and which they will swallow undetected, to an almost incredible extent.—No ; he merely treated his lordship as if he had possessed ten times as much tact, wit, talent, and external advantages, as he really did, yet he never told his lordship that he had either one or the other, but seemed to take the matter for granted—as an acknowledged fact. Then he had a way of suggesting a good thing now and then, and giving Friskerton the credit of it, nay, absolutely making him believe himself the originator, with a thousand other little unstudied flatteries based upon the above-mentioned assumption.

As for Friskerton, he saw in Count de Biron a man of exalted talent and (poor Frisky !) congenial disposition, one, too, nearly

his equal in station and reputed fortune, one therefore who could have no interest in courting his society, but real personal liking. Yes, Biron was his friend, and oh! how infinitely more delightful to confide in such a noble, generous fellow, than in the needy parasites, who even Friskerton could occasionally see through!

The kind-hearted young peer introduced Mesmer to all his acquaintances, and unconsciously imitating, to a certain extent, the tactics of his 'friend,' retailed as facts of established notoriety the stories he had from time to time, after Birons's habitually careless and *inadvertent* manner, received from the lips of that accomplished and veracious personage.

Mesmer soon became one of those "not to know whom argues, &c.;" and such was the admiration and esteem his beauty, grace, and tact, everywhere secured him, that Lord Friskerton began to be regarded merely as

his *pendant*, and 'Biron boots,' and wrappers became facts of universal popularity.

And here, at least, *one* redeeming point in our hero's character deserves to be commemorated; and that is, that although he had it in his power to have run away with at least half-a-dozen heiresses of more than thrice the fortune of Miss Merlmore, his devotion to the divine Augusta remained unaltered, or rather grew every day more intense, indeed, we are firmly persuaded, that had it been made the condition of his seeing her, Mesmer would have daily perpetrated so many downright virtuous actions, as would have served as a set-off against all his other iniquities. No fairy however proposing the condition he considered it totally superfluous to indulge in any such unworldly luxuries.

But we must not generalize too much, because we believe it to be boring; so, as Eugene Sue says at the beginning of all his chapters, 'the following scene took place' some months after the events last narrated in

Lord Friskerton's drawing room a few minutes on the shady side of midnight—which by the way is just this moment by a curious coincidence in the very act of striking. But fear not susceptible reader we are not getting sleepy, nor will our storied page relax one jot in its habitual liveliness, the *early* part of the morning is our brightest epoch, although you might experience some difficulty in 'getting a rise out of us' in the forenoon.

Biron reclined upon a sofa, indulging in a *chibouque* which Friskerton had brought with him from Smyrna or Cairo, we forget which—a glass upon a table by his side filled with a mysterious, colorless fluid, which might have been soda-water, but on near approach smelt most uncommonly like whisky.

Rat tat a tat tat tat !

“ There's Frisk come home from the house,” muttered Mesmer. A moment afterwards that enlightened senator entered the apartment.—

“ Well Frisk,” said our hero languidly, “ what have you been about ? ”

“ Voting about some infernal railway, or some law bill, or something ; I got amazingly sleepy at last, and all I remember is that the duke put somebody down, and Brougham put somebody up, and the government put something off—some explanation about something, I think positively I am quite done up---but this can’t go on much longer, or I shall fall a victim to my patriotism ! ”

“ But why do you not *spea*k ?---that would make the thing more piquant, seeing yourself in print the next morning.”

“ I have tried---no use---I have not got the pluck, so there’s an end of the matter.”

“ Well, you must adopt the eastern proverb---‘ to speak is silver, but to be silent is gold.’ ”

“ Is it ?---then I ought to have a rather prodigious balance at my banker’s by this time,” said the peer, laughing at what he

thought a somewhat uncommon piece of smartness.

“ Ha, ha ! Frisk,” said Biron, “ you should say that in the house some day.”

“ By the bye, count, did you go to Mrs. Bernard Tullamore’s ?”

“ I did, most noble Frisk.”

“ And pray how was she looking.”

“ Beautiful as ever, but sad.”

“ Sad ! why so ?”

“ Nonsense, Frisk, I hate affectation.”

“ What do you mean ?”

“ Oh, damn it !---do you pretend to insinuate that you are ignorant of her *penchant* for a certain young peer who would be good-looking if *rouè* were not written on every other feature of his countenance, and who would be a most amiable personage if he were not the most sly and designing humbug breathing !”

To this agreeable *badinage*, Lord Friskerton replied by a self-satisfied grin and an indes-

cribable "no really do you——?"

"Pooh!" said Biron, "you will not extort a compliment, but if you are not blind---which heaven knows you never are, where your own interest is concerned, you must see it---but what are we to do---go to bed like respectable citizens---eh, Frisk?"

"Go to---the devil!"

"With all my heart, if we only knew where he lived."

"Three streets from this there is an excellent hell."

"Bravo! I am just in a gambling humour, but I have only twenty pounds in my purse."

"No matter, you will lose the less---unless you like to make me your banker---but if so, say it before you start, as I make it a rule not to take more than a certain sum with me to these places."

"Upon my soul, Frisk, you grow prudent and economical!"

“ A relic from my days of younger brotherhood.”

“ What! were you a younger brother?”

“ I was, three years ago vegetating upon the munificent allowance of one hundred and fifty pounds a year. I flatter myself that *my* governor *was* the closest old file* that ever mounted a horse—or, being mounted, e’er got down again!”

“ Not so bad as Henry Scales’s, whom we met the other day, he paints those eccentric pictures you know, that are so much admired just now; *his* father, he told me, cut him off altogether, because he could not make up his mind to cut up live bodies and dead, and study midwifery, in short, become a surgeon and apothecary, for the cure of old, and manufacture of new diseases.”

“ By the way, Scales dines at the club with

* The slang made use of by Lord Friskerton may appear exaggerated—but it is from life.

us to-morrow, and we are to finish the evening at his chambers—I have never been there before, but I understand he generally collects a few oddities. He spoke of a negro musician and a man born deaf and dumb.”

“He told *me* that some of his prettiest models would be there,” said Biron.

“Indeed?—I suppose not *in statu quo*?”

“Frisk! I must positively cut you, you are getting quite immoral.”

“Bad company, bad company, as Falstaff would say, has corrupted my innocence, Count Bi-ron,” replied the peer with a drawl.

“But I happen to be of English not French family, and my name happens to be *Biron* not *Beeron*,” said Mesmer, laughing.

“Well, Beeron or Biron, it’s a devilish romantic name, and you are a romantic looking fellow enough with those dark curls of yours—though I fancy fair men get on best with the other sex, old boy.—”

“Mrs. Bernard Tullamore, *par exemple*”

said Mesmer, in a tone which might be most accurately defined as a cross between a query and a sneer. At this crisis they entered the portals of Pandemonium.

In a short time they were located at the *rouge et noir* table, and having exchanged a few nods with some of their acquaintance who were present, were soon absorbed in the overwhelming interest of the game.

Friskerton, who had some vague idea of the doctrine of chances, began to prick a card with most commendable industry; but his companion with extreme nonchalance threw down a few sovereigns, at random, now upon this color, now upon that, now doubling, now leaving them to accumulate.

Meanwhile Friskerton pricked and pricked, and lost and lost, until he began to back his game by bets to a considerable amount, with equal ill-fortune.

Luck however seemed to smile upon her wayward child in this as in former instances.

Mesmer had thrown down a tenpound note upon the *rouge*—*rouge* was the winner—he pushed the money over to the *noir*--*noir* was triumphant—again his stakes were doubled—again --

“Do not tempt fortune,” said Friskerton, “take them up!”

Again *noir*---six times our adventurer saw his store multiplied--- a seventh --- and the relentless *croupier* swept off the golden heap.

“If you had taken my advice---” said Friskerton.

“*N'importe*,” said Mesmer, gaily, “we play for excitement, not for money, I hope.”

The keen eye of a man at the other end of the room rested with a gleam of satisfaction upon the utterer of these words---it was the banker---he did not know Count Mesmer de Biron.

“I have lost two hundred pounds!” said Friskerton as they proceeded homewards.

“And I have won thirty,” said the count.

“The deuce you have, I thought that grand *coup* had cleared you out---why did you not go on?”

“I have no passion for gambling,” said Biron, coolly.

“Nor have I,” said Friskerton, “but then you know there is a sort of *je ne sais quoi* that carries one away---you understand?”

“Indeed I do not, for I never felt it.”

And Mesmer, looking towards the sky, which was just beginning to shew symptoms of sun rise, gave vent to the following brief rhapsody, much to the surprise of his companion.——

“Who comes on purple mists and rosy clouds upheld, clad in a robe of freshening dew and crowned with beaming light?---It is Aurora, goddess of the dawn, her pale bright glances rest reproachfully upon the haggard faces of the two home-reeling youths! As Weimar’s poet sings——

‘The world of *spirits* is not shut—

“ But the gin shops are,” quoth Friskerton, interjectionally.

“ Thy heart is closed, thy senses dead,
Rise student, bathe thy earth born breast
In bright Aurora’s beams of red !” *

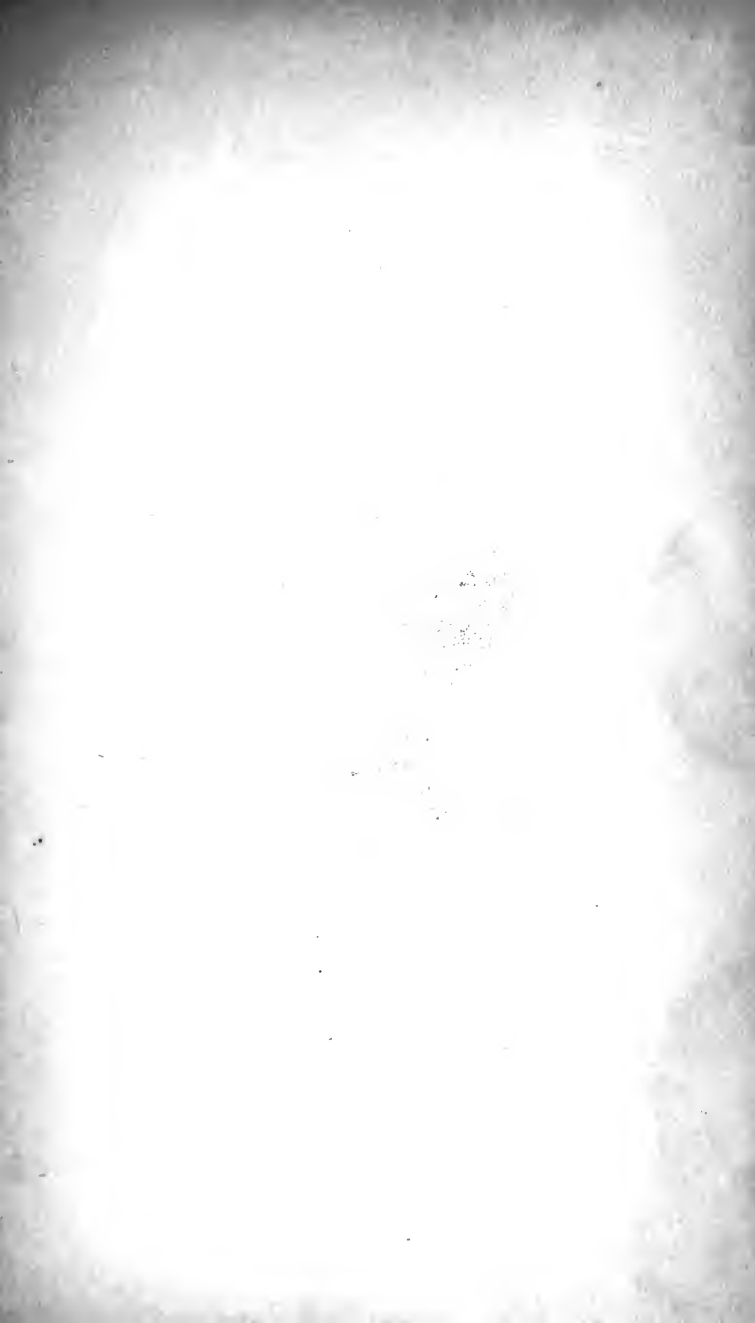
“ Why Biron, old fellow, you will be as bad, as your namesake, before you have done with it.”

“ *Nous verrons*,” said the noble rhapsodist as they entered Lord Friskerton’s mansion.

“ And now to bed, to bed, to bed, to bed, to bed !”

“ I wish one was as certain of going to sleep,” muttered Friskerton, pressing his hand to his brow with a lack lustre gaze at a marble bust upon the staircase.

* Faust. We have ventured to throw these lines into English metre, doubtless the original is well known to many of our readers.





HARRY SCALES.

HARRY SCALES.

PHRENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

Moderate sized head. Comparison and the perceptive faculties predominating in the intellect. Music, Imitation and Ideality rather large. Large Benevolence and love of approbation with only moderate self esteem. Large affections with considerable development of cerebellum.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EVENING WITH AN ARTIST.

AFTER an excellent dinner at one of the Clubs to which Lord Friskerton, and *the* Club to which Biron already belonged, the real and the pretended nobleman accompanied Harry Scales, as had been arranged, to his studio, in order to spend the evening in a manner at once convivial and original.

The artist's abode was in a retired square, once the habitation of the great, the wealthy,

and the fashionable, now chiefly tenanted by lawyers and other professional people, to whom a convenient and central locality was of more importance than the popular prejudices of the *beau monde*.

The houses were mostly of a sombre and melancholy aspect, which was rather heightened than relieved, by the coats of dusky *compo*, which a few here and there had adopted.

The shrubs in the centre had long since broken themselves of the habit of shewing green leaves at the appropriate season, the iron railings by which they were surrounded had grown rusty, and the pump become downright venerable from the lapse of unpainted ages.

Harry Scales stopped at the door of one of the houses, and by the application of a latch key, introduced his distinguished visitors to the interior of the mansion. There utter darkness held its reign, so that not knowing

the *locale*, Lord Friskerton and Mesmer wisely determined to stand still, and watch the course of events.

Meanwhile the artist boldly advanced towards the foot of the staircase, and taking a lucifer from the interior of a flat candlestick which was ingeniously balanced on the extreme point of the balustrade (as being, of all other places, the most fraught with danger to its stability) proceeded to rub it against the wall, with that utter contempt for *paint* peculiar to all members of the human race inhabiting those abodes of savage simplicity and hardy solitude, termed ‘chambers,’ but which in an artist was hardly to be anticipated.

The attempt was, as usual, unsuccessful, and Scales now proceeded to do what would have been by far the wisest and simplest course in the first instance, viz., to call up the house-keeper.

“Mrs. Snuggins,” said he, “bring up a light, these d——d lucifers won’t burn!—

They never do when they are wanted—
“It is a great bore,” added he apologetically to his friends, “they have been going to have the gas laid on here, for the last six months, but somehow or other it is never done. Mrs. Snuggins, remind me to-morrow about writing to the gas metre man.”

“Very well, sir,” replied Mrs. Snuggins preceding them upstairs with the candle.

They now found themselves in a large room which, had the house been tenanted by a single family, would have been termed the drawing-room. The paper hangings were of a rich embossed crimson pattern, the furniture of curious and antique workmanship. All the chairs had arms ; some were of oak, with high backs ; they were ranged round an octagon table artfully inlaid with brass, at one end of the room.

Leaning against the walls on every side were paintings, studies, and half finished pieces, some with their bare canvass backs

turned to the spectator, others upside down, or on their sides in careless confusion. Torsos, too, there were, and casts of heads, and hands, and arms, and legs, with grinning skulls and hideous skeletons. There was a lay figure in one corner dressed in a crimson mantle ; and a looking-glass and an easel and a large square divan, covered with red cloth and surrounded by a screen to prevent the models from catching cold.

There were foils and boxing-gloves in another corner, and ancient helmets and breast-plates, and battle-axes on the wall, with other mystic instruments puzzling to the comprehension of the uninitiated. On either side of the mantelpiece were two magnificent marble vases, and in the centre an enormous stuffed toad, who looked amazingly like the chairman of some society for the propagation of something that is never propagated, or the suppression of something that is never suppressed.

But all this heterogeneous collection of ob-

jects was left in comparative darkness by the two wax candles upon the table, placed in the sockets of a candelabrum, at an angle of forty-five degrees, with supreme indifference to the polish of the said table, and the interest of the fire insurance company, the light of which was insufficient to penetrate the remote corners of the spacious apartment. And on the table also stood a steaming urn of fragrant mocha and the best cigars that were to be procured, in odd looking cases like unto boots; and claret bottles and meerschaums for those who preferred them.

“Be seated, my Lord,” said their host, “take that chair, Count de Biron, and try this coffee, it is *a la Francaise*.”

“These are good cigars,” said Mesmer.

“I am glad you like them, they were sent me, by a brother of mine, in the navy, who smuggled them with his own hands.”

“I never smoked a better,” said Friskerton,

“and the certainty of their being smuggled adds a zest to their flavour.”

“For my part, I prefer a pipe,” said the artist, as he filled a meerschaum.

A knock and a ring were heard at the street door.

“Two of my prettiest models,” said Scales, “I am painting a madonna from one of them, and a despairing sea-nymph from the other ; I know the knock.”

Scales was right in his conjecture, the door opened and two beautiful girls entered the room, the one a magnificent brunette, the other a little fairy with chesnut curls, and laughing, light blue eyes. They seemed quite at home in the artist's studio, and the brunette (who by the way was the despairing sea nymph) kissed the painter in a vastly affectionate manner.

The blue eyed Madonna on the other hand wished him a very ceremonious good evening, and so the artist kissed her instead.

“Miss Julia Jackson, Miss Emily Stackera, Lord Friskerton, Count de Biron,” said Harry Scales; “and now, Julia pour out the coffee that’s a good sea nymph!”

Having taken off their shawls and bonnets the girls seated themselves at the table, and a very lively discussion on the present state of art took place, in which the model young ladies displayed considerable practical knowledge.

“I cannot help thinking,” said Mesmer, “that the artists of the present day exhibit a most woeful deficiency in imagination, and choose very uninteresting subjects, and to that rather than to deficiency in the execution I ascribe the existence of so few great artistic geniuses.”

“I am quite of your opinion,” said Miss Julia, “and it was just what I was saying to Scaly the other day. ‘My dear Mr. Scales’ said I, ‘why don’t you paint me riding to heaven on a rainbow?’”

“Ah! why not?” said Biron, “there is

something sublime, something elevating in a subject like *that*?"

"Yes, but," said Lord Friskerton, "how the deuce could you keep your seat on such a slippery thing as a rainbow?"

"Oh!" said the Madonna, "of course Miss Jackson would ride gentleman's fashion."

"For shame, Emily, you should not say such things."

"Well," said Scales, "I do not think my despairing sea-nymph such a bad idea."

"Can we look at it yet?" enquired Mesmer.

"By all means; there it is upon the easel yonder, it is turned round to evade the dust--- Julia, just hold the light a moment---well, what do you think of it?"

"It is beautiful!" said Biron "the harmony of color is perfect, and I can conceive nothing more graceful than the attitude or more touching than the expression."

"Ah!" said Julia, "I always enter into the spirit of a subject, don't I Scaly?"

"I am indeed immensely indebted to you" replied the artist.

"Do you think it like me?" inquired the pretty model naïvely.

"The face is a perfect portrait of course," replied Mesmer.

"Idealized a little perhaps."

"Features like yours require no idealizing --as for the rest, unless I saw you in the costume."

"Out of all costume you mean, unless a robe of sea water goes for anything."

"I must say," said Lord Friskerton "I do envy you Scales most devilishly!"

"Now let us look at the Madonna."

At this crisis there was another knock at the door, and a young man of about seventeen made his appearance. He was of middling stature, and naturally good-looking, but had a wild, dissipated air. His dress was almost too rich to be tasteful, his stock and waiscoat especially, being of the most resplendent descrip-

tion, he wore a gold watch guard, and a diamond ring, and had an off hand manner which, though not of a vulgar character, conveyed an almost painful idea of recklessness to his associates."

"Mr. Theodore Ramsay," said Scales, and then proceeded to introduce him to the company already assembled.

That well-stocked personage threw himself into a chair, stretched out his patent leather terminations with an air of extreme nonchalance, and shaking back his light hair from his face, began to puff away at a cigar with industrious impetuosity.

The party was soon increased by the arrival of Mr. Desmond, an author of great wit and talents, and a sculptor of some eminence who had a genius for acting, and was great in comic songs and imitations of popular members of parliament and comedians.

The stream of conversation now flowed rapidly, some anchovy sandwiches and excellent punch

made their appearance. Art, science, politics, metaphysics, love, pleasure, beauty, were by turns discussed. Desmond had travelled much, and made the personal acquaintance of many foreign celebrities, he knew also most of the great literary lions of his own country, and was full of entertaining anecdotes. Lord Friskerton made up in spirits what he wanted in wit. Scales himself was a quiet humorist, and though not a man of words, an excellent listener. The girls threw in their nonsense by way of leaven. The sculptor imitated Peel, and Sibthorp, and Benjamin D'Israeli,* to the life, and Ramsay gave way to a wild merriment which seemed rather the result of a despairing mind, than of exuberant animal spirits. It was remarkable

*The situation of jester to the House of Commons seems now to lie pretty equally on the shoulders of these two last mentioned worthies. Sidonia's buffonery is however decidedly the more *piquant* of the two.

that he shrunk from all allusions to the future, he seemed to talk on life as if the next morning were to be his last, and absolutely turned pale with dismay on the sculptor's throwing out a hint as to the lateness of the hour, and the propriety of separating for the night.

The bold paradoxes and startling cynicisms of Mesmer especially delighted him, and he was eager in noting down an extempore song which our hero composed at the request of Miss Julia Jackson, who had heard from Scales that he possessed that talent.

The artist, who had merely made the assertion in jest, was not a little surprised when, after a couple of minutes' reflection, Mesmer quietly begged the fair sea-nymph to give him a subject.

"Oh! something about an artist or a painting."

"Shall it be humorous or serious," inquired the improvisator.

“ Serious---horrible, if you like --- I do so love horrible stories !”

“ Very well then, we will call it ‘ The Painter’s bargain.’ ”

And Biron sang to a wild Schubertain melody, accompanying himself with a few chords on a guitar, (on which instrument Scales was a proficient) the following stanzas.—

The painter stood in his darkened room,
Completing a work of horror and gloom,
On a stone he had torn from a ravishing tomb.
—The monarch fiend of hell !

Again he stood in a chamber bright
And finished a work of glory and light ;
Oh ! few could bear that beauty’s sight
—The virgin queen of love !

Ha !—hark ! a voice from that phantom fell
“ What shall I give thee painter, tell,
To make thee for ever the slave of hell,
All things are in my power ?”

Then the painter turned to the shape divine,
“ Friend,” he exclaimed, “ I’m for ever thine,
Let the virgin queen of love be mine
But for a single hour !”

“ Bravo !—excellent !—ha, ha, ha !”

“ I don’t know,” said Friskerton, “ it makes me feel quite uncomfortable, there is something utterly diabolical about you this evening Biron.”

“ Oh, it was glorious !” said Ramsay, “ I wish the devil would make me such an offer --- I would be *so* reasonable !”

“ Beware he does not take you at your word,” said Mesmer, quietly.

“ You are not one of his agents, I hope ?” said Scales, laughing.

“ Do you know anything of this young Ramsay,” said Biron to Desmond, as they left the house in conjunction with Lord Friskerton.

“ All I know of him,” replied the author, “ is that he has been unfortunate enough to

lose both his parents, has no property whatever, though his family is very good, I understand. He had a government clerkship, which he gave up without consulting any of his friends, and has since taken to painting landscapes, in which I believe he has not been very successful. His recklessness and extravagance have caused his relations altogether to renounce him. He is clever, but so insanely self-willed, so perfectly the slave of passion and impulse, that any attempt to give him a profession or fixed position must eventually fail. Not that I ought to censure him, for I have been almost as bad myself, though the blind goddess has given me some portion of literary success and earthly possessions."

"But there is a sort of desperation about this boy, which makes me fear he will even commit some serious crime, should opportunity offer or necessity compel."

“My impression,” replied Desmond, “is that he will either commit suicide or turn actor before very long, but I do not think he will come out as a bandit or a horse-stealer.”

“I should like to assist him,” said Biron, “it is a pity that such talents, as I believe him to possess, should be checked in their healthy development.”

“Well,” said Desmond, “I shall be most happy if you can render him any real assistance. I myself offered, some time since, to take him as my private secretary, which would at least have kept him out of harm’s way, secured him a certain income and a comfortable home, but he declined it after a few days consideration. The fact was, a play of his was performed at some minor theatre, and he, therefore, happened to have a little *ready money* at the time. By the way you remark how well he dresses?”

“Say rather how expensively?”

“ True, it would be more correct ; I introduced him to my tailor, and he has run up a bill of fifty pounds within seven months. Not being of age, a fact I unfortunately forgot to communicate to the man of coats, the latter has no legal remedy, and I feel uncomfortable, being, as it were, *particeps criminis*.”

“ Good God !” exclaimed Mesmer, “ the idea of feeling compunction for a tailor’s sufferings !—can you give me poor Ramsay’s address ?”

“ I will send it you to-morrow ; but, my dear Count, I sadly fear that your kind liberality will be sown upon very barren soil.”

“ So do I,” said Friskerton, “ I think it is great humbug.”

“ Well, good night,” said Desmond, “ I shall take a cab ; you know I live on the other side of the park.”

“ Good night !”

“ Nice fellow, is Desmond,” said Friskerton,

“ I always liked him—there is no affectation about him, and he does not kow-tow to every Lord he falls in with.”

“ No *savoir vivre*,” said Mesmer, who was jealous of anybody but himself obtaining ascendancy over the young peer, and moreover rather disliked Desmond, not personally, but because he was a man of keen judgment and discrimination, and a little too fond of exercising them upon individual character.

“ A fine girl that despairing sea-nymph !” suggested Mesmer by way of a safety valve.

“ Very,” replied Friskerton, and till they reached his door he talked of nothing else but artists, models in general, and Miss Julia Jackson, and Emily Stackeray in particular.

“ I wish I knew where Julia lived,” said Lord Friskerton.

“ Scales can tell you, I dare say.”

“ More likely warn me off like a d——d game-keeper,” said his Lordship.

“ He certainly has the game in his own hands,” replied our hero.

“ Again good night.”

CHAPTER XXV.

AT THE OPERA.

“AND so you think Fornasari wants grace?” said Mesmer, as he stood beside Miss Merlmore, in Colonel Rossmill’s box at the opera.

“I do;” replied Augusta, “what do you think of the new *singer*?”

“The new singer—I did not observe one—what is her name?”

“What! have you not heard of the celebrated Chicorini?”

“No, I never look at the playbills, and rarely at the stage.”

“Then why do you come to the opera.”

“To enjoy the strange dreams and reveries which the sound of the music excites in my imagination, and to see---Miss Augusta Merlmore.”

The last words were uttered in an almost inaudible voice, nevertheless Augusta heard them, and stooped to pick up a flower she had dropped — was it to hide a blush?”

“I wish the opera house were burned down!” said Mesmer.

“Burned down! what a dreadful wish—but why?”

“We should have something new in its place.”

“But what could we have more delightful?”

“A thousand things, if people would only exercise their invention; imagine Lumley

seated amid the ruins of the opera house like Marius at Carthage?"

"Ha—ha—ha! laughed Lord Friskerton, "I have been hunting for you everywhere, my dear Count, and should never have found you had I not chanced to meet the Prince von Rosenberg, who told me at once where you were."

"I wish Friskerton you would go to the —— I mean if you are going to Mrs. Bernard Tullamore's box, I wish you would remind her of her promise to send me those verses of Miss Darcy's on 'Impossibility.'"

"The young peer took the hint without suspecting for an instant the object that suggested it and departed to execute his friend's commission, and flirt with Mrs. Tullamore."

"An excellent person is Friskerton," said Biron, "but at times a terrible bore!"

"So I should imagine; he once gave me an account of catching a salmon in the Liffey that lasted full two hours!"

“ He could not have baited his hooks well.

“ He might have abated them altogether very well indeed.”

“ But his being a bore is not to be wondered at.”

“ Why not ?”

“ I understand his father was a terrible old screw.”

“ A *plane* reason for his aptness to *nail* listeners.”

“ He should have gone to the bar and become a judge.”

“ Do you think him calculated for such an office ?”

“ At any rate he is full of old *saws* and modern instances.”

“ I think we have exhausted the carpenter’s box of similies.”

“ I believe there is the *chisel* yet left, but we will leave that to the fashionable novelists for the noses of their heroines.”

“ Has Prince Aurelius shown you any wonders of *clair voyance* ?”

“ He has, great wonders !”

“ And are you converted ?”

“ I am convinced.”

“ You should get a case, and experimentalize for yourself.”

“ No, I for one am content with the evidence of my senses.”

“ Do you not think that magnetism may be applied to the most dangerous ends ?”

“ Doubtless it may, and has been before now ; the prince tells me that he has frequently mesmerised people without their being aware of it, thrown them into a trance, and made them do the most extraordinary things.”

“ Good heavens ! I hope you are not magnetising me at this moment !” exclaimed Augusta raising her eyes timidly to those of the Count.

But the calm expression of those soft, dark orbs reassured her, and Mesmer said in a tone of gentle sadness.

“The power may be also unconsciously exercised, are you sure you are not magnetising me?”

“*We progress.*” muttered Biron as he turned away after handing Augusta into her carriage.

“Do not forget that you are to dine with me to-morrow,” said Colonel Rossmill.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FURNISHING.

COLONEL ROSSMILL had given up possession of his house to the Count, the money had been paid, the deeds signed, sealed, and delivered, and Mesmer, thanks to the information so surreptitiously obtained from Messrs. Monville and Cashall, had cheated the worthy Colonel out of some thousand pounds, without that gallant officer, in the most remote

degree, suspecting the fact, which it was equally the interest of Monville as of our hero to keep secret.

But even had the lawyer, which was highly improbable—even had he revealed the true facts of the case to the Colonel, Mesmer was perfectly prepared to deny the allegation, and indeed it must be remembered that Colonel Rossmill had himself proposed the sum to be given for the house, and that had Biron not accidentally become aware of Monville's rascality, and thus become accessory thereto, he *might* by possibility have been a purchaser of the house upon the same terms, without any detriment to his character as a "most honorable man."

However, the house was now his, and an excellent house it was ; he had taken the carpets and curtains, slabs, looking-glasses, &c., at a valuation, so that the work of furnishing was an easy one, and was effected in a somewhat showy, yet withal tasteful manner, by

the contracting upholsterer, for the sum of five hundred guineas.

And lest, firstly, the exalted imagination of the reader should murmur at these occasional allusions to arithmetic ; secondly, judging from his own experience, should assert the impossibility of furnishing a house for so trifling a sum as that we have mentioned ; we reply, firstly, that considering the very small patrimony of our adventurer, it is absolutely necessary for us to keep some account of his expenditure ; secondly, that the people who sell furniture are, on the average, the most dangerous of all tradesmen, as far as the question of " honesty being the best policy," is a matter of any importance.

To exemplify this fact, if that it requires any exemplification, we can assure the reader that we have not unfrequently been asked twice, or even thrice the sum, for a piece of furniture, at one shop, identically similar to

that we could have bought it for the same price at another's; and a lady of our acquaintance gave us a notable instance of their roguery a few days since.

It seemed that in a quiet, morning costume she entered one of these repositories of chairs and tables, and enquired the price of a small ottoman of novel shape.

"Five guineas ma'am," said the shopkeeper, who concluded, by her being on foot, and without a page behind her, that she must be a nobody.

As she was leaving the shop, the carriage of the rich and fashionable Lady D—— drove up to the door.

"Our friend lingered a moment at the door, and heard her ladyship enquire the price of the very same ottoman.

"*Ten* guineas your ladyship," said the man of rosewood and mahogany.

"But I do not like this blue damask;

what will be the expense of having it green ?” •

“ *Eleven* guineas,” quoth the man.

“ Very well,” said Lady D—— ; let me have it as soon as possible.”

A week or two afterwards our friend saw a green damask ottoman in the drawing-room of her ladyship, with whom she was acquainted ; it was not the same she had seen, but one of very inferior make and appearance. Of course she enlightened her friend as to the *mechaneeté* of which she had been a victim.

So much for Upholsterers ! and here let me observe, that our object, in writing books is, to give information, and that no information is unimportant which conduces to increase our knowledge of the world. It may, it is true, be a matter of little consequence—a trifle— whether we are taken in or not occasionally by a tradesman or two, but the whole system is false and detrimental—

ex uno disce omnes — life is made up of trifles.

Mesmer de Biron's house was furnished, as far as the mere necessities were concerned ; a housekeeper and other servants were engaged, and the Count began to think of the decorative department.

Accordingly, he drove down to the shop of a noted dealer in casts, and was soon supplied with a Venus de Medicis, an Eve at the fountain, an Ariadne, and sundry busts and vases of antique shape, with befitting pedestals, all which tended to give his *salon* an elegant and tasteful aspect, to which two or three voluptuous paintings, and copies of the old masters by young but clever artists, not a little conduced.

"Faith," said the courageous adventurer as he threw himself into a *bergère* in his new drawing-room, "it is a fine thing to be a respectable householder—now if there were a general election to-morrow, I should have a

vote to dispose of, or rather *four* votes, for I might sell one to each of the candidates and never take the trouble to vote after all !”

With which characteristic observation of our hero we will conclude this unimportant chapter of our history.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AUGUSTA.

MR. MERLMORE had taken a furnished house for his wife and family, who had arrived from Cheltenham, his 'last known place of abode,' as the writs have it, and Augusta left her uncle Colonel Rossmill's, to go and live with her parents.

They gave a dinner party. Lord Friskerton and Mesmer and Harry Scales were there, together with Mrs. Bernard Tullamore and Cecilia Darcy, the young poetess. Our hero sat next to Augusta, and opposite to Mrs. Bernard Tullamore, by whose side was the

devoted Friskerton. The artist and the “azure hose,”* found themselves in delightful propinquity, and as for the rest of the guests, they were, as Eōthen would say, so “utterly respectable” (chiefly inhabitants of squares and crescents) that they defy even the magic of description like ours, to do anything towards making them interesting.

One of these anthropophagi nevertheless deserves mention, as having furnished the “virgin and scales”—to talk astronomically—in plain English, Harry Scales and Cecilia Darcy with subject matter for a little quizzing, to which they were severally addicted. He was a man of doubtful age, with a triangular-shaped countenance, bounded on the north by a forest—a *black* forest of remarkably obstinate hair with a considerable tendency to curl three ways at once. On the east and west, by pine-

* A novel of transatlantic celebrity, and although replete with absurdity, is well worth perusing.

like plantations of a similar character, and on the south, by a white neck-cloth of *papier maché*, or something so very smooth, and stiff, and shiny, that we may be excused for mistaking it for that fashionable substance.

Towards the centre of this animated *Delta* rose a round, rugged hill, which, as Pinnock's human Geography teaches us, was called bottle-nose, and beneath it yawned a tremendous cavity, which rather resembled an earthquake than a volcano in its operations; though the vast quantity of words he managed to pour forth between his mouthfuls somewhat reminded one of the latter phenomenon and suggested the notion that the *champignons* going down and the sentences coming up, must occasionally meet with terrible collisions in the passage of his throat.

"Who is that monster opposite looking at the album?" said Harry Scales, in a low voice, to Cecilia.

"My maternal uncle," replied the young lady quietly.

“ Good heavens !” exclaimed the horrified artist, “ I beg your pardon, I had not the slightest idea.”

“ Nonsense !” said the young lady, “ you are quite right ; he *is* a monster.”

“ And is he really ?”

“ My uncle?—not that I am aware of—who is he, Augusta ?”

“ Doctor Core, the homœopathist,” replied Miss Merlmore to her friend.

“ With a non homœopathic appetite,” murmured Biron, “ I met him at the ——s the other evening, and incredible as it may appear, saw him devour seven slices of sponge cake one after another !”

“ What an ogre !”

“ Quite a natural phenomenon, I assure you, or I should not have alluded to such a subject ; but when I heard again and again repeated his ‘ I’ll trouble you for this and that,’ and saw ‘ this and that’ disappear with more than magical rapidity, I felt, I can assure you,

a serious apprehension that the next time he opened his enormous mouth, he would swallow me, boots and all at a mouthful."

"But look at the non homœopathic what an inimitable grimace!"

"Hush, the ogre is looking this way," said Augusta.

"Dinner is on the table."

The above conversation, of course, took place in the drawing room, although we believe we have already described the position of Mr. Merlmore's guests at table.

Now, this was very bad behaviour on the part of the young people, and the gods of propriety, whoever they may be, looked down from their peculiar corner of Olympus, and vowed retribution for their violated laws.

The last whisper of our hero was overheard by the doctor with the triangular countenance. The mighty Cox felt desperately annoyed, he vowed most dire revenge, and soon hit upon a scheme to appease the injured manes of his dignity.

It required but little penetration to detect the position in which Mesmer stood with reference to Augusta Merlmore, and upon that rock the Doctor founded his battery. First, he asked Augusta to take wine with him,* then attacked Mesmer with a similar invitation, then he appealed to the young lady as to her opinion regarding the last new opera (which by the way he had never seen, as like Moore's dreaming peer "he loathed sweet music with all his soul") whereupon he insisted upon knowing the lover's opinion upon the same interesting subject. In fine he with the most persevering ingenuity succeeded in preventing them from enjoying a moment's converse to themselves.

At first Biron simply regarded him as a bore, and by answering his questions with repulsive terseness, endeavoured to check the unceasing flow of his oratory; but when, after dinner, the triangular faced homoeopathist

* A troublesome and antediluvian custom, now happily exploded amongst the more civilized classes of mankind.

persisted in planting himself by the side of the radiant Augusta in the drawing-room, and striving to absorb her attention, his indignation was vehemently roused, and he felt how infinitely agreeable it would be to assassinate Dr. Cox on his way homewards with a bowie knife, *a l'Americaine* and hang his carcass by the coat collar from the spikes of an arch in Piccadilly. This, however, was an after consideration, at present he was compelled to devise some more quiet mode of getting rid of the bore.

“None but the brave—and so on!” thought Biron, as he walked up to his future father-in-law, who was standing at the other end of the room.

“I understand,” said Mesmer, that Colonel Rossmill sent you a cast of the head of Bobtail, the man who recently knocked his Grandmother’s brains out, and starved his wife and children to death in a hay-loft—I should like to see it, if it would not be troubling you too much. Dr. Cox too there is most eager to inspect it.”

“ By all means then,” said Merlmore, “ come and see it at once.”

Biron crossed the room to the homœopathist, and told him that Mr. Merlmore had something he particularly wished to shew him.”

They, accordingly, all three proceeded to another room where the cast was lying on a table. In a few minutes Merlmore and the Doctor were involved in a hot discussion as to the natural benevolence of the unhappy criminal ; pending which ‘ lecture upon heads,’ our hero slipped away, and returning to the drawing-room, prepared to decide without delay the momentous question upon which the happiness or misery of one of the purest and most beautiful creatures that ever breathed the air of life depended.

The weather was sultry, and Augusta had just stationed herself at a window to inhale the cool breeze of night, whilst the *éblouissante* Mrs. Bernard Tullamore turned over a heap of Italian songs upon the piano-forte, with the assistance of the assiduous Lord Friskerton ;

and Cecilia Darcy, and Harry Scales ratiocinated together in an opposite corner of the room. What the other respectable people were doing we really do not remember, but have a shrewd suspicion that the female portion were engaged in 'praising absent friends,' with their importantly unimportant hostess.

Mrs. Merlmore, by the way, *née* Rossmill, was some years older than her husband, and if, for once in a way, common fame was right, her handsome husband was by no means a model of fidelity; she was, however, fat and shortsighted, perhaps too a sharer of her spouse's necessarian doctrines. She might have been pretty in bygone days, but as she took no trouble to 'make up,' did not, at the time we treat of, present any extreme traces of fascination to the eyes of the carnal minded. She was serious, some said stupid, and it was certainly not from her maternal parent that the fair Augusta inherited her constitutional vivacity.

A peculiar presentiment caused the heart of Miss Merlmore to throb with increased rapidity, and her soft, dark, liquid orbs to seek the apex of her little satin slippared foot, as Mesmer took his seat beside her and spoke—of the heat of the room, and the ears of her silken-coated Blenheim.

Yet even in these, apparently, unimportant commonplaces Augusta could not but feel the thrilling influence of that divine ether, which the refined and pure minded Shelley, not inaptly deemed the vital spirit of the universe, that wondrous power of which so much has been written, said and sung, pondered and dreamed—the inexhaustible freshness of the theme yet unabated, of which the fantastic Heine with such truly poetical feelings tells us in the words of the ghostly minstrel arising at midnight from his grave and addressing his spectral comrades—but we *must* give the passage complete:—

“Twas night—the student left his room,
To wander in darkness and midnight gloom,

And as he passed by the church yard wall,
He gazed on the tombstones, white and tall.
The moon shines pale on the minstrel's grave,
And the cypress trees in darkness wave,
And a whisper is heard—"I come—I come!"
And a shadow dim, stands o'er the tomb;
It is the minstrel's well-known face,
On a tombstone high, he takes his place,
And strikes his lyre, the wild blasts groan,
And he sings with hollow spectral tone."

"Ha! know ye still the ancient song
For which our hearts have burnt so long,
Ye strings so old and tough?

*The angels call it a heavenly spell,
The demons say 'tis a torture of hell,
But mortals term it—love!"*

Even in our careless translation we flatter ourselves that the racy originality, and wild grandeur, of these lines is not totally lost. We have long meditated giving a selection of Heine's poems in an English form to the public, but the times and the people are so de-

cidedly anti-poetical that we fear we must content ourselves with a volume for private distribution, as the fear of a commission *de lunatico inquirendo*, being taken out against them might deter possible readers from daring to become purchasers.

To return to the fair Augusta.

Soon with calm but impassioned gaze, the bright eyes of the enraptured impostor were fixed upon her beautiful features, an unwonted glow illuminated his usually pale countenance, low musical soul—penetrating accents fell with a magic power upon her ear. Stronger than ever became her conviction that to wed one so superior to the weaknesses and vanities of her race, as Count Mesmer de Biron, one who had for her sake scorned the richest and the loftiest matches, one who united the most brilliant intellect to unequalled personal appearance; the profoundest learning to the noblest birth, and most extensive fortune, was indeed the

highest happiness that could fall to the lot of woman.

“How oppressive is the heat of this room!” said Mesmer.

“It is indeed,” said Augusta.

“And how delightfully refreshing the air from the open window.”

“Delightful.”

“It is thus with the soul shut up within itself in fevered loneliness thirsting for the balmy breath of sympathy, a vent for the overcharged sensation, an expansion for the feelings—where is the soul to find relief?”

“Continue your simile,” said Augusta, with cast down eyes and quickened pulsation.

“Briefly, then to conclude my allegory, the casement is love---and love is happiness---the only happiness to the wise---you approach the window, and the joyous zephyr rushes to meet you, Augusta! it is for you to complete the mythus?”

Perhaps this sounds pedantic, far-fetched, to the critical reader, but Biron's mind was of no common cast, and then the tone, the looks on such occasions outweigh whole lexicons of words !

Before they parted that evening, Mesmer de Biron had proposed, and been accepted by Augusta Merlmore.

What painter, as the latter, retiring to her bedroom for the night, threw herself upon her knees by her bedside, and poured forth thanks to heaven for her new found bliss, could have refrained from assimilating that graceful form—that countenance radiant with the enthusiasm of love, beside which the long dark ringlets so gently undulated, along the white pure neck and virgin breast, throbbing to the first pure transports of budding passion, with the houris of Moslem writ, or the classic nymphs of mythologic story !

And *he*, he too who stands alone with the night, like a dark statue, in the balcony of his

ill-gained home, *his* features too might claim comparison with seraphs, yet methinks by some their *expression* might be more readily likened to the fierce triumph of a fallen archangel!





CECILIA.

CECILIA.

PHRENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

A tolerable intellectual lobe. Sense of humour, Imitation, Number and ideality large, the sentiments fully developed. Love of approbation large. Affections large.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONFIDENCES

THE next day Cecilia Darcy called upon Miss Merlmore. They were old and intimate friends, had been born in the same County, and known one another from childhood.

“I have come,” said Miss Darcy, “to entrust to you a secret.”

“And I have a confidence to make to you,” said Augusta.

“I think I can guess its substance.”

“ I am sure I already know your secret.”

“ Count de Biron proposed to you yesterday evening ?”

“ Mr. Harry Scales made you an offer ?
Am I correct in my supposition ?”

“ You are. Am I in mine ?”

“ Perfectly ; and you accepted him ?”

“ I did—and you ?”

“ Did likewise—I wonder whether we shall be happy !”

“ As happy as it is possible to be, in this world of cares and sorrows !”

“ What do you think of the Count ?”

“ He appears to be amiable, accomplished, frank, handsome—in short, everything you could desire. ”

“ He is indeed, Cecilia, and what is still better, he is one of the most kind-hearted and benevolent beings in existence ; do you know he rarely passes a day without going to see my poor, mad uncle, and they tell me that he

always seems better after his visits. To every one else, even to my father, poor Guy is violent and repulsive."

"How dreadful!—it is, indeed, kind of the Count."

"Yes, and he says that perhaps he may be enabled to effect, by degrees, my uncle's recovery, and even hints at regaining his property; it is surprising the trouble and anxiety he entails upon himself; I more than suspect, too, that he has gone to the expense of consulting some of the most eminent lawyers on the subject."

"What noble disinterestedness!—by the way he has bought two of Harry's pictures, and brought Prince Aurelius to his studio the other morning, to see the new painting he had just commenced, which Rosenberg immediately offered to take when completed."

"Mr. Scales is certainly rising most rapidly into notice; he will soon be one of the most noted artists of the day."

“ I am so glad you think so ; you should see his last design from “ The revolt of Islam,” it is magnificent ; but perhaps I am not an unprejudiced judge. You know, my dear Augusta, that I have no fortune, and that Harry has nothing but his profession, or, doubtless, we should have been united long ago. Ours is a courtship of nearly three years’ standing.”

“ And *ours*,” said Augusta laughingly, “ of little more than three months *going on* ; indeed, I have felt some scruples as to whether the Count has not been too precipitate.”

“ My dear friend,” said Cecilia, “ if love does not exist after half a dozen meetings, I do not believe that it ever will at all.”

“ I must candidly confess,” rejoined Augusta, “ that the very first time I beheld my Biron, I felt a sort of electro sympathetic thrill which I never remember feeling before in my life.”

“And I with equal candour acknowledge that the first time I met Harry Scales, I thought him the most agreeable and fascinating person I ever encountered.”

“You must not write any more odes to the Prince de Rosenberg,” said Augusta slyly.

“I never did,” replied Cecilia blushing, “but in his character of a magnetiser—the proud, cold-hearted creature.”

“Nevertheless, he is very handsome,” said Augusta pensively, “and there is something mystic, *a je ne sais quoi* about him which makes one feel—”

“That it would not be impossible, but very unwise to fall in love with him.”

“Exactly, and it would be happy for more than one person we know had they borne this in mind.”

“But do you not think it possible that he may form an alliance with some one in his own rank of life?”

“ No ; I have heard him declare hundreds and hundreds of times that he would marry a peasant girl, if he could find in her all the qualities which he deems indispensable in a wife—and these are simply comprised in the word—*perfection*.”

“ He is a strange creature, and seems to act from wondrous and lofty principles.”

“ Perhaps so ; yet, I am inclined to think that liberty is his greatest deity, and to have his own way in everything, his grandest principle.”

“ One thing I like about him, he never gives advice.”

“ And, if his own words are to be believed, never takes it.”

“ Perhaps after all he is only a sublime Egotist.”

“ Yet he does much good.”

“ But with what motives ?”

“ Fie, Cecilia ! do not be uncharitable, or I shall think—”

What Miss Merlmore would have thought must remain a mystery to succeeding generations, for at this crisis we were disturbed by a morning visiter, and on the honor of a novelist, when we resumed the pen, our former train of reminiscences was utterly and irretrievably broken."

CHAPTER XXIX

WARNING.

MYSTERIOUS paragraphs in the Post and Herald announced to match-making maternity that a certain noble count and his presumed three thousand a-year had vanished from the matrimonial market. More than one fair bosom heaved with painful emotion at the intelligence, for Mesmer had been liberal in his attentions, and many a visionary countess had been created by his roving glances.

“Is it true?” said Lady Quibbleton to Prince Aurelius, whom she encountered at one of the Marchioness of Saltamont’s *soirées*, to which she had contrived, God knows how, to obtain an invitation. “Is it true that your young friend the Count de Biron is about to marry Miss Merlmore and her ninety thousand pounds?”

(N. B. Multiplication by three, is a sort of brevet rank usually assigned to the fortunes of young ladies—bear this in mind ye ardent speculators of the drawing-room and boudoir!)

“I am not aware that he is about to espouse either,” replied the prince, with an almost imperceptible tinge of annoyance in his tone.

“Dear me, why there is a paragraph in the——”

“I never read the newspapers.”

“Do you dance the cellarius?”

“Dance the *cancan*! quoth Aurelius with

a smile, as he escaped from the charms of her ladyship's conversation.

There was one thing he could not stand—old women. Much as he railed against marriage it was chiefly in the society of the young and fair that he delighted. Even that of men had few attractions for him. He liked to gaze on beauty, and he liked the deference of his girlish friends. They listened to his words as to those of an ancient oracle, they revered him as a God, by whom the rhymes of more than one Pythoness were inspired.

With the male sex, on the other hand, he felt bored and embarrassed. Either they were pedants, men who had drank deep of the learning of the schools, with little independent exercise of thought, or they were practical, common-place souls to whom the poetical was unrevealed, and their inferiority in intellect to himself was so palpable, as to annihilate all possibility of sympathy. Half of them would prose and wonder over questions he

had long since decided, few in all probability destined to reach, as a conclusion, the point from which he commenced his enquiries. More than all he abominated the society of young men fresh from college. The notions, (if any) contracted at a university are so confined, so ludicrously one-sided. Nothing excited more horrible ideas in the mind of Prince Aurelius, than the expression Oxford-man, Cambridge-man, or, in his own land, student of Bonn, Heidelberg, or Berlin. What Wellington-boots are to the feet, universities are to the mind, he would say.

“But,” said Colonel Rossmill, himself an Oxonian, as they one day argued this oft contested point, “what would you substitute in their place?”

“A course of private study.”

“But what test would you have for men about to enter the church or any other profession in which a degree is now thought requisite?”

“I would have no church and no degrees, and for professions an examination as at present, though certainly conducted in a very different manner and on very different subjects.”

“But do you not think that the association of young men of similar age and pursuits is beneficial.”

“Decidedly not.”

“But it excites emulation.”

“Which of all things I would avoid; men should aspire to the excellent not to excel.”

“Yet I fancy there must be an age in which the effervescence of youth must bubble and evaporate, surely this is better at a college than in the world.”

“Oh!” rejoined the prince, “I have nothing to oppose to a seminary for the acquiring of the noble arts of hunting, tandem driving, and boat racing.”

And so, for the time, the matter dropt.

“I cannot understand this about Biron,” thought Aurelius, “I am surprised that he did not allude to it yesterday, and he is

generally so frank—certainly Augusta is very beautiful—I might have made her Princess de Rosenberg—but now it is too late—too late! is it possible that I--- I, the cold unimpassioned student --- Bah! away with such folly!"

And Aurelius fell into a reverie.

"Good evening, your highness," said a voice.

He turned round, it was Biron.

"Good evening," said Aurelius, "I congratulate you on your prospective felicity."

"Thank you, my dear prince," replied Mesmer, who was by this time on the most intimate terms with the prince. "I have resolved to *do the deed!*"

"Think, reflect a moment before, like Curtius, you plunge into the gulf of matrimony---remember there is no return."

"I have both thought and reflected."

"And you are determined to sacrifice your freedom."

“ Can you blame me, when my chains are mingled gold and roses?”

“ You will repent it---I never yet knew a man who married and did not repent it.”

“ I never repent. And where could I find a more beautiful goddess to devote myself to than Augusta Merlmore.”

“ A few years and the beauty you admire is faded.”

“ In a few years you and I shall sleep with our fathers.”

“ Time is but relative, but in how very short a period compared to the total duration of man's existence does beauty lose its bloom.”

“ Then you presume that I cannot be happy when my wife ceases to be pretty---Hem!---ten years of happiness ---for you will allow the probability of Augusta even *improving* up to her eight-and-twentieth year — ten years is worth an experiment.”

“ I have awakened from such delusions.”

“Then take my advice and go to sleep again as fast as you can. Nothing makes people more miserable in this world than over wisdom.”

“Our great object should be truth.”

“Which we never arrive at.”

“No, but we labour towards that end.”

“And each step we advance in our labours, disrobes life of some delightful though deceptive charm. Better a happy fool than melancholly sage!”

“*Cha cum a sonjont.*” *

“And now for the cellarius.”

* This phrase was originally French, but, with many others, has been translated by the devil, (the printer's) into an unknown tongue of his own invention, which it would puzzle the ghost of Irving himself to decypher.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE VESTIGES OF CREATION. — A SCIENTIFIC
INTERLUDE.

“ HANE you read this new book, Prince?” said Lady Saltamount, to Aurelius.

“ There are so many new books.”

“ I mean ‘ The Vestiges of Creation,’ replied the Marchioness, motioning to him to seat himself beside her on an ottoman, with which wish, as she was still young, and had fine eyes, he instantly complied.

“ I have—the mysterious author honored me with a presentation copy,” replied the Prince.”

“ And what is your opinion of its general principles ?”

“ First give me your word that you are not the writer.”

“ *I write a scientific work !*”

“ You are accused of a romance.”

“ Unjustly, I assure you ; but even if it were true, this book is—”

“ A romance of science—works of fiction affect to describe what *probably* would happen under certain circumstances, ‘ The Vestiges of Creation’ do no more.”

“ I certainly must confess,” said Lady Saltamont, “ that the perusal of its pages did not add even *one conviction* to my mind. It appeared to me that much the author says *might* have been ; but there is scarcely a fact one could point to and say, this is satisfactorily proved, this *must* have been, this *was* as he has stated.”

“and yet,” said Aurelius, “notwithstanding the incorrectness or distortion of facts, the strained analogical reasonings, and the apparent ignorance of the writer as to what has been already written, with a similar view by the older materialists and the German Geologists, so little known in this country, yet (excuse my patriotic arrogance) so far beyond your countrymen, if not in practical details, at least in grandeur and completeness of their general theories;* notwithstanding all this, the author of ‘The Vestiges,’ as a collator and arranger (though decidedly without any pretensions to original genius) deserves the highest credit for his research and laborious ingenuity.

* In a lecture we had an opportunity of hearing more than three years ago, at the assembly rooms at Bonn, Professor Noeggerath condensed, into a discourse of scarcely two hours’ duration, a history of the earth’s geological formation little diverse from that maintained in ‘The Vestiges.’ For further remarks on this subject, see appen lix.

His style, too, is agreeable and plausible, and his book may pave the way to other and more successful attempts to unravel the mystery of existence. Towards this end, however, *he has done nothing*. His ‘original globule,’ and his parturient ‘fire-mist’ are at best but retrospective conjectures, and even could they be proved to be facts, would in no wise lessen the difficulty of accounting for the phenomena of the universe. The fire-mist and the globule, containing in themselves the elements and principles of all future things, are obviously quite as wonderful, as nature in its present and more advanced condition, and the question, whence, and how did *they* come into existence, change or modification ? or being in existence, *uni ergo* remains still to be solved.”

“ Which,” said Lady Saltamont, “ we will not now attempt. I am infinitely obliged to you for the trouble you have taken in criticising for me.”

“For heaven’s sake ! do not take my careless observations for an attempt at serious criticism !” exclaimed the startled prince, who abhorred flippancy in scientific matters. “You might as well take my young friend De Biron’s poem for a serious abridgment of the treatise.”

“What ! has the Count written a poem ?”

“Yes, it is too bad, a burlesque upon the Vestiges—he burlesques everything.”

“Oh, how delightfully funny ! I must get him to let me see it—here he comes.”

“I thought he had sent you a copy already,” murmured Aurelius, “or I should have held my tongue. I hope you will discountenance such profanation.”

“Depend upon it, I will read him a most severe lecture on the levity of his muse’s behaviour,” said the marchioness. “Ah ! Count, the Prince has been telling me of your poetical perpetration ; I am dying to read it ; I hope you have a copy of it with you.”

“ I am afraid *I have*—the printer’s proof in my pocket.”

“ You are going to publish it, then ?”

“ Mercy, my lady ! suspect me not of the vulgarism of popular authorship ! No, I am merely having *a thousand* copies printed for private circulation.”

“ Well, you must promise me the first copy.”

“ Your ladyship may command the *second*, but the *first* is already dedicated to her at whose instigation I took up the goose-quill.”

“ I understand—the happy object of your choice—the second be it then, and now let me entreat you, as a special favour, to read it to us aloud.”

“ Yes, pray do favour us.”

“ We shall be eternally grateful.”

“ Do not disappoint us.”

Numberless similar entreaties soon resounded on all sides, in vain Mesmer affected

reluctance, pleaded hoarseness, imperfection, and a dozen other excuses, usual on such occasions ; his objections were, one by one, overruled by his fair petitioners, (for be it observed that on such occasions masculine bipeds usually stand aloof, or continue talking with real or assumed indifference) and the Count drawing from his pocket a sheet of printed paper, commenced reading, in a solemn tone, with a grave and sedate expression of countenance, that contrasted strangely with the convulsions of laughter of his listeners—

THE VESTIGES OF CREATION.

BOOKMAKER LOQUITUR.

When first of all, I took in hand
The business of creation,
The world was all a *fiery mist*
To outward observation,
All smoke and blaze, confusion dire,
Before the tempests scudding,

With here and there a *nucleus*,
Like plums in a plum pudding.

II.

Now how or whence this fiery mist,
And plums had a *beginning*,
I don't know, therefore cannot tell,
Enough, they took to *spinning*,
The fire-mist took to *gravitate*,
And thus conduced to twist 'em,
Thence every nucleus became
A splendid *astral system*.

III.

For moving round, their rapid whirl
Produced a ring external,
Which cracked to bits—of future *suns*
Each part became the kernel,
Suns majored *planets*—they of *moons*
Were captains by like fracture,
And *Saturn's ring* may still be seen,
To prove the manufacture.

IV.

The earth now like a fire balloon,
Or Bengal light went flying,

· Fizzing and whizzing round the sun,
At perspiration trying,
In course of time, of course it grew,
Much cooler, also smaller,
Though Jove and Herschel older are,
And fatter, also taller.

V.

The earth now having ceased to boil,
Like pea-soup in a kettle,
The lighter portions upwards flew,
The heavier did settle,
(True, *Ovid* tried—some years ago,
A scheme like this to fudge off,
But men of stars and stones and bones,
Your classics don't think much of.)

VI.

Now water came—by accident,
Or gaseous condensation,
Oceans there were, rocks, islands, mounts,
Took up their situation,
Then rain formed lakes, streams, polypi
Sea-weed appeared, and shell-fish ;—

But stay, and I will tell you *why*,
The world's so cursed selfish.

VII.

The earth when crusted and condensed,
In gravity specific,
Comes nearest tin, that metal hence
Of ills is so prolific ;
And hence for *tin* your worldlings risk
The loss of youth and heaven,
Knowing their chances of success
Are nearly five to seven.*

VIII.

Now nature tried her practised hand,
At trees and living creatures,
Improving each succeeding beast,
In form as well as features,

* The specific gravity of tin is, 7,66, that of the earth, 5,299

Mollusca, saurians, reptiles then ;
 Though some cannot determine,
Which first their tails began to wag,
 The fishes or the vermin.

IX.

Birds spread their wings, and mammals soon,
 Four legged, shew their faces,
One dines upon his fellow-brute,
 Another calmly grazes,
And last, as often fair caprice
 Makes gentlemen of flunkies,
Apes, one fine morning drop their tails,
 And men grow out of monkeys.

X.

And lest this change should puzzling seem,
 Know that such generation,
If not in fact quite proved as yet,
 Is so in speculation.
And here I'll give at least one hint,
 I really did not cabbage,
Relating to a fine machine,
 Found out by Mr. Babbage.

XI.

Which for some thousand turns goes right,
And then it seems goes wrong,
Thus ages long baboons may howl,
Their heir then sing a song,
(Many at this idea so bright
Have stared and vainly wondered,
Twice two, they say, is all the same.
As twice ten or ten hundred.

XII.

His meaning, I must say, becomes
More dark the more I scan it,
As also what he meaneth by
Bouleversement of a planet,
Which taketh place with Uranus,
Whose moons perverse, to fool us,
Turn in the teeth of nature's laws.
—Exception proof of rule is.)

XIII.

A pretty mess all things were in,
When in a state of chaos,

I came, I saw, I conquered all,
Like Cæsar, Julius Caius,
And yet I'm happy to propose,
To weigh men's souls like guineas,
For brains *are* souls, and by the scales
Distinguish wise from ninnies.

XIV.

To measure thoughts by pints and yards,
And faculties by acres,
Found a galvanic shop and sell,
To would be bards and lakers,
A cask of genius ready made,
To spendthrifts potted caution,
And men whose cowardly legs *will* run,
Of valor any portion.

XV.

Of my ideas I frankly own,
That I a deuced lot owe,
Especially that *monkey tale*,
Was cribbed from Lord Monboddo,
My name a mystery must be,
I really can't tell *you it*,

What's in a name ? yet in this verse
'Tis writ—if men but knew it.

XVI.

FIN.

Friends ponder well these *facts* obscure,
Done into verse with wisdom,
By one who 's seen a thing or two,
And what is more, has quizzed 'em !

We will not stop to describe the “ bravos !” the praises, the compliments, the entreaties for copies, by which our hero's lecture was followed. It added one more melancholy example in support of man's tendency to sneer at, rather than admire the union of science with imagination, and we have chiefly introduced the above verses from a consciousness of having, at the commencement of our history, dashed somewhat boldly *in medias res*. We

must confess that we admire the old plan of telling—

“What went before, by way of episode,”

and flatter ourselves that with the aid of the above poem, Rollin's ancient history, Gibbon's Rome, Hallam's Middle Ages, Roch's revolutions, and our novels, the reader may put himself in possession of the history of things in general, with considerable facility.

CHAPTER XXXI.

EXPLANATIONS.

“Sixty thousand pounds in the funds?” said Mr. Merlmore.

“Precisely, in the three per cents; you see my position in a pecuniary point of view is soon explained.”

“You have no landed property then?”

“Not an acre; indeed I have no other property, worth mentioning, of any description, excepting this house, which, as you are aware, I recently purchased of your brother-in-law Colonel Rossmill.”

“You should buy an estate, and get into Parliament?”

“I intend to do so. The fact is our family had formerly considerable estates in Ireland, but my father, whose unfortunate peculiarities of character I have already alluded to, disposed of them many years ago, and after hoarding in seclusion for half his life, died and left me in possession of the sum I have just specified.”

“And with regard to settlements—I propose that the young lady’s fortune be settled upon herself,” said Biron after meditating a moment on the critical dangers of his position.

But we will not pursue this conversation any further, suffice it to say that at the end of a long

conference with his future son-in-law Mr. Merlmore was fully satisfied that his daughter was about to make, in every respect, a most desirable match, and went home muttering to himself that it was

A very fine thing to be father-in-law
To a very magnificent three tailed bashaw.

“Countess de Biron,” he repeated; “it sounds well, upon my soul!”

The marriage was to take place in a few months.

“Now,” exclaimed Mesmer, “as soon as he found himself alone—now is the time to prove to myself that I have not overrated my genius. Calmly courageous let me breast the flood—all hitherto has been smooth and unruffled—but I foresee that rocks and whirlpools are at hand—if I escape them, I am a being all earth envies, if, *if* I fail—I am lost—lost for ever!”

Within half an hour after his interview with Mr. Merlmore, Mesmer de Biron drew the last fifty pounds that remained of his money from his banker's.

END OF VOL. I.



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